

**Warm-up**

"Try as I might I cannot do this" are words you may occasionally utter. What might be missing in this dilemma?

- ▶ God writes His laws upon my heart and on my mind.

**Striving for Perfection** (vs. 1-4)

*"For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near."* (v. 1)

There is nothing wrong with human effort, striving for something good. And all the more when we strive to please God with our effort, *"not lagging behind (slothful) in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"* (Rom. 12:11).

On the contrary, lackadaisical, lazy behavior is condemned in the Bible. *"The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway."* (Prov. 15:19). *"He also who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys."* (Prov. 18:9). So, set the bar high, pursue your goals, and do it all for the Lord and with His strength and wisdom.

Remember, however, that the law (my good works) can never save me (make me perfect) no matter how hard I try. If my good works made me perfect I'd become perfect and quit trying to please God! Heb. 10:2 says it this way, *"Otherwise, would they (sacrifices) not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?"*

As believers we know that we can only worship God because of his grace. When our purpose gets skewed we are worshiping ourselves (our effort) vs. God. James 4:17 says, *"Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."* And so our striving for perfection apart from God's grace can dupe us into worshiping our efforts, as though they accomplished our salvation. Rom. 1:25 describes the bottom of this spiral: *"For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."*

Like David, I must always be aware of my sins and my need for Christ's sacrifice (see Ps. 51:4). *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."* (Ps. 51:17)

- ▶ God reminds us of our shortcomings and His sacrifice in order to create in us a heart of worship.

**The Missing Link** (vs. 5-9)

*"He said, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL.' He takes away the first in order to establish the second."* (v. 9)

Have you ever been absorbed in trying to solve a problem when "the light came on"? It may have come in the form of new insight or ingenuity, or maybe just some practical, "aha!" piece of information. Maybe it was a friend's advice or counsel. But it opened up your eyes and you were able to solve the problem. I love it when God gives me insight into people relationships in this manner!

It's like my human mind cannot grasp the things of God, nor can my efforts please Him. I need God's Spirit to "turn the light on". *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."* (Rom. 8:2). Romans 8 goes on to say, *"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin."* (v. 3)

Your life is incomplete without Jesus Christ! He is the missing link. His sacrifice wiped away the need for me to earn God's favor, and fuels my heart to worship Him.

Does your theology permit you to believe that God may take things away in your life in order to replace them with something better? Just because you've done something good (by Biblical standards) that God has blessed before does not mean that God wants it to remain unchanged as He works in you and through you. If we really believe "the mind of man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps" (Prov. 16:9) we have to be willing to let go. Nothing grows without change, as they say. Just as grain is shaken in a sieve to purify it (see Amos 9:9) God sometimes upsets our world in order to remove some things that hinder what He wants to do in us.

- ▶ God often brings about change in our lives as He perfects or sharpens us. Yield to Him when this happens and allow Him to do this work. Your perspective will be enlarged and you'll be blessed!

### **Perfect Fit** (vs. 10-14)

*"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."* (v. 14)

In mathematics the word *complimentary* means the portion that completes the picture, such a complimentary angle. It's the Hebrew word *neged* in Genesis 2:18 that means opposite, or suitable; "a helpmate suitable (complimentary) for him". It means to complete the picture and make it whole. I think that sometimes we are looking for a solution from God according to our plan, whereas His plan is to give us something we were not expecting, but that is perfect for us.

So, what did Christ do for you to make you "perfect"? What was missing in your life that was not apparent to you, but that left you incomplete or empty? In the context of this passage in Hebrews I believe it was inability to save ourselves from ourselves. There was nothing that we could do to satisfy God's anger against our sinful nature. We were made in His image (part of the formula) but could not complete the picture by living according to His law. His plan for the priests to make daily sacrifices didn't work; call it "operator error" if you like! Because God's love for us is so great, and He is so holy and perfect, the only solution was to send his perfect Son, Jesus Christ, to fill that missing part of us and make us righteous.

And so there we have the "perfect fit", the complimentary piece that makes us whole. When we accept God's gift of Jesus Christ, He never stops working to make us more like Himself. *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 1:6)

► *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Cor. 5:21) Jesus Christ is the "perfect fit" for us!

### **Sealed & Delivered** (vs. 15-17)

*"THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM. AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,"* (v. 16)

I got to thinking about verse 16. It is much like my goal as a father. I made a covenant with God, along with Trisha, to raise my kids to know the Lord and His ways. After they'd been with me for 18 or so years I wanted His laws / our teachings to be permanently embedded in their hearts and minds. I wanted to present them to the Father as his servants, equipped to do His will. And now I want to reinforce these same truths in the minds of my grandchildren.

I think this is God's goal for us as His children. He gave us His Spirit as our teacher, our tutor. He patiently instructs us and counsels us; He forgives our blunders and picks us up to try again. He encourages us. He writes on our hearts. He asks us to store His truth in our minds and meditate on it in our hearts. He launches us into the world to be His witnesses. He protects us from the enemy and empowers us to do His will. He is a proud Father!

Have you made a covenant with God? Do you have spiritual goals, and a strategy for accomplishing them? God wants our promises also!

What are you willing to promise God that you'll do for Him this year? Will you write it down here?

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Who has God placed in your life that you sense He wants you to influence or even teach?

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► *You were "sealed and delivered" in order for God to use you in the lives of others, and to live for Him.*

### **Group Discussion**

1. How can "try as I might" be either a blessing or a hindrance as a believer? (vs. 1-4)
2. Share a time when God "took away" something important to you in order to better use you. (vs. 5-9)
3. Share how God "made you whole" when He came into your life to "fill up that which was lacking". (v. 10-14)

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**NEXT TIME: Lesson 7: PERFECTED / Persevere – Hebrews 10:18-39**