

## Because of Jesus Christ – We are Saints Triumphant!

There seems to be an obsession that many people have with something called “perfection.” I recently saw a little picture of a decorated Christmas tree with this question, “Do you suffer from P.O.P.D?” Perfect Ornament Placement Disorder. As if there’s something wrong with arranging the ornaments on your tree just so?

Seriously though, lots of folks struggle with both aspects of this concept of perfection. On the one hand you have some who are trying to be, striving at all costs - perfect... and it consumes them mentally and emotionally. The other side there are those who take the laze faire approach of “nobody’s perfect” so why even try – which often leads to not putting forth one’s best efforts. Who cares? – God cares.

Our text from Hebrews this week addresses “perfection” in a way that is sometimes very hard for us to grasp or even believe that it is possible. The author is telling us – he’s telling all believers, “You are Perfect,” or perhaps to be a little clearer, “You have already been made perfect!” God’s goal has been accomplished – Already AND Almost. I know that may sound like a contradiction, but from God’s perspective this is in perfect harmony. This is what we’re going to consider on this Sunday called “Saints Triumphant” and we pray that the Holy Spirit would lead us to see that through Jesus Christ, we are Saints – ones who have been made perfect – Triumphant, already and almost.

### I. Already!

First off the writer to the Hebrews wants to nail down for us this concept of perfection. The Greek word literally means, “to have reached its goal” “to have accomplished its purpose.” Our reading continues directly from last Sunday as we saw Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest and Mediator. He has gone before God Almighty on our behalf to win for us eternal salvation. By perfect life for 33 years on this year and by his innocent suffering and death on the cross he accomplished the goal God had set before him. He didn’t just strive for it and come close, he accomplished it – perfectly. With 6 very vivid pictures our text proves this is true.

- 1) In verse 13 we read “**By ONE sacrifice**” We know what that one sacrifice was, it was Jesus himself: the spotless, sinless Lamb of God. He became the atoning sacrifice, not only for our sins but for the sins of the whole world! There only had to be one, because Jesus was truly sinless, unlike in the Old Testament where sacrifices happened day after day, year after year, century after century.
- 2) The writer also makes it clear that Christ’s sacrifice was “**for ALL sin**” – for all your sins, for all my sins; for all the sins of the whole world! For our big nasty sins, for our discreet private sins, our sins of thought, word and deed – yes, even for original sin – Jesus died for all sin.
- 3) The result of Christ’s sacrifice is clear? “**He has made perfect...**” Jesus whole purpose of coming to this earth was to fulfill the Will of God – and He did it. He not only won complete forgiveness of your sins, but he also accomplished holiness, righteousness, perfection – and through faith it has all been credited to your account! Through faith you are Clothed in Christ and so when God sees you, he sees Jesus’ holiness and perfection. Yes – already! Yes – now! Yes – today! Because of Jesus you are a Triumphant Saint! You don’t need to strive to become perfect (we can’t) for Christ has already made you perfect! He has restored in you that holy, sinless, image of God in which he created all things.
- 4) Additionally, our text uses these two words to underscore the enduring impact of Christ’s accomplishment: “**forever!**” and “**for all time!**” Just because we sin daily, doesn’t mean the Christ has to go back on the cross daily. His sacrifice was made once for all people for all time! It’s effect is forever.
- 5) And the Holy Spirit also testifies to this blessed reality in verses 17-18. Even as we struggle with our daily sins and as our past sins replay like a broken record, God does the amazing! He chooses “**to remember no more**” the sins we have committed. Instead what he does remember? Our Name which he has written in the Book of Life. In the book of Revelation, for the unbelievers, their deeds are written down... for the believer, only their name is written in the Book of Life.

- 6) And finally, if all this isn't proof enough that all has been accomplished for us and that Christ's perfection has been fully credited to our account, we hear that **Christ sat down!** Think of what a contrast that was to the Old Testament priests who served day after day, offering sacrifices again and again, sacrifices that could never take away sin. Christ sat down! His work of salvation was finished! Accomplished - *"By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."*

So, do you see what God is telling you? Do you get the "perfect" picture? You and I and all believers are "Saints Triumphant." Sin, Satan and hell have all been conquered for us. Through faith in Jesus – we are Victors already – and almost. There is yet one more enemy that we probably all will face. Unless Christ comes in the next instant, we will meet death; and yet we meet it not in fear or terror, but as a Victor in Christ.

## II. Almost!

Verse 14 is really the highlight of the whole text; it tells us of Jesus' perfect accomplishment – how it's complete – and yet how it's ongoing! *"By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."* In the New Testament era, more and more people are being brought to faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit, one by one, sets people free from sin and free for service to the one true God. This is the mission continuing work of the New Testament. As triumphant saints we are part of this powerful live-saving Gospel proclamation until we draw our last breath. And even then, our death is a victory.

The death of a believer is yet one more of God's children is brought safely home into the arms of Jesus – free from this world of sin, free from pain and sorrow, free from decay, suffering and sadness; never again to be tempted, never again to fall into sin. Heaven is where we will then dwell in God's perfect holiness forever! There we will fully and completely see the triumph of Christ Jesus over every enemy.

For each of us, that day is drawing closer and closer day by day. And to comfort until that day, the writer to the Hebrews wants to remember WHERE Christ is sitting and WHAT that means. <sup>12</sup> *But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.* Not only is this a position of honor which due to Christ, but it is a position of complete authority and ruling power. Christ is not resting or idly twiddling his thumbs waiting for the last day, he is intentionally ruling and directing all things for the good of His Kingdom and for the good of His people. This is a promise that you and I need to remember, in good and bad times. We may not always see the good – especially as we are enduring daily struggles and witness the hatred of Christ by so many – but the Holy Spirit wants us to know that Jesus is directing all things according to His perfect Will right up until the last hour comes – and then comes "the footstool."

Footstool is an interesting word. In our mind's eye we might first think of an ottoman, or a recliner... now Jesus can put his feet up and relax. That's not the picture here. Where else would a conquering King place his foot but squarely on the neck of his enemy whom he has completely defeated! That's the picture of the end. That's the total triumph on Judgment Day as he raises to life all who have died, as he pronounces his verdict! King David pictured this so vividly in our Psalm today, Psalm 110, *"The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."* What a Conqueror! What a perfect Savior!

God our Father truly has an obsession with perfection – and in the most blessed and good way. He himself is perfect; in the beginning he made a perfect world. Sin ruined it, but God provided away for perfection to be regained. Now he eagerly awaits that day when all things will be perfect again forever in heaven. In the meantime, as we too await that day, we realize there are so many people who are still struggling with perfection... trying to be that on their own, trying to get themselves right with God... or, on the flip side, we know many who frankly don't care about what happens when they die. But as redeemed Children of God – we do care – we care because we know how much Christ cares and the care he undertook to bring about righteousness, peace, holiness, perfection and triumphant victory for all. May we, as saints triumphant, continue to be for others a light and beacon, pointing people to their perfect Savior, Jesus Christ who *"by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."* Amen.