

A Biblical Refutation of Pre-Glory Sinless Perfection

This lesson is about a topic that's more widespread in Christian circles than I previously thought: that a believer in Christ could obtain sinless perfection in this life & body before the reception of the glorified body at the resurrection. I will endeavor to refute this biblically ..

•The Apostle Paul called himself toward the end of his life the chief of sinners ..

1 Timothy 1:15 NASBS

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom *I am foremost of all.*

And he had some pretty impressive credentials ..

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

•Paul in Romans 7 ..

Romans 7:14-25 NASBS

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. [15] For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. [16] But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. [17] So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. [18] For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the *willing* is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. [19] *For the good that I want*, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. [20] But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. [21] I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. [22] *For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man*, [23] but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. [24] Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? [25] *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

This is probably the most evident text proving the ongoing struggle & failure with sin of the believer. The only way to reject it is to try to show this is referring to Paul in his pre-conversion state. There are many problems with that but the top three are- 1) Paul repeatedly states he has the desire in the heart to do right. This is impossible for an unconverted person as Jesus Himself teaches unbelievers want to do the desires of the devil (evil): John 8:44. Not to mention the many other places this (unbelievers don't desire righteousness) is taught (Gen 6:5 ..). 2) Paul confesses Jesus Christ as Lord in v25. He's battling sin as a Christian too. 3) Paul refers to himself as the "chief of sinners" at the very end of his life (long after he wrote Romans). See 1 Tim 1:15 above.

•Jesus Himself called believers evil ..

Matthew 7:11 NASBS

If you then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your Father* (believer) who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

•Philippians 3:12-14 NASBS

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. [13] Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

I think you see here the clear principle for the believer to strive for righteousness with all their heart while acknowledging imperfection.

And in v14, the "upward call" (the rapture) is when Paul (and every true believer) will obtain perfection.

•Humility is a large part of holiness and that assumes this → while we battle willful sin (and is necessary for joy), our best 5 minutes are far from the perfect righteousness of Christ ..

Luke 14:11 NASBS

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

James 4:6 NASBS

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

1 Peter 5:5 NASBS

..clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

•Other texts clearly refuting sinless perfection of the believer

Matthew 6:12 NASBS

'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'

Asking for forgiveness is an integral part of the Lord's prayer.

James 3:2 NASBS

For we all stumble in many ways ..

Psalms 143:2 NASBS

And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous. (Written by a believer, David)

Proverbs 20:9 NASBS

Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin"?

Galatians 5:16-17 NASBS

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the *desire* of the flesh. [17] For the flesh sets its *desire* against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Ephesians 4:22 NASBS

that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which *is being corrupted* in accordance with the lusts of deceit

Believers will always have sinful desires to war against.

1 John 3:2 NASBS

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

A clear contrast between our current unredeemed body & our future glorified body.

▪Passages wrongly used to defend sinless perfection

Matthew 5:48 NASBS

Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

I think the idea here is to strive towards perfect obedience while acknowledging we won't attain it until glory (Rom 7:24). Also, chapter 5 largely deals with correcting the Pharisees incorrect interpretation/application of the Law of God, so the idea could be follow the correct interpretation (don't be like them, be like your Father).

1 John 2:1 NASBS

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous

While sinless perfection is impossible, each time a temptation arises, the indwelling Holy Spirit gives us the capacity not to sin. But you see that is immediately followed by the ongoing solution when we do.

1 John 3:4-10 NASBS

Everyone who *practices* sin also *practices* lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. [5] You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. [6] No one who abides in Him sins; *no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him(. [7] Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who *practices* righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; [8] the one who *practices* sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one who is born of God *practices* sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. [10] By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not *practice* righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

"Practicing" here doesn't refer to perfection or completeness, but the consistent pattern and trajectory of life (righteousness or sin). If a person's life is dominated by unrepentant & unbroken sin patterns, they aren't born again. If a person's life is patterned by a motivation for (imperfect)

righteousness, they are. So in this clear context, v6 is not saying if you sin at all, you don't know Christ, but if your life is an unbroken *practice* of sin, you don't.

To conclude, believers are repeatedly commanded to fight sin hard daily by the power of the Holy Spirit and the means of grace God gives (¹saturate your mind with scripture ²develop a heartfelt consistent prayer life and ³regular fellowship in a sound biblical church). Yet scripture also teaches we live in unredeemed flesh making the complete eradication of the sin principle impossible until the reception of our glorified bodies at the rapture (1 Cor 15:42-57). So by God's grace let us humbly battle sin until the trumpet blast !