

Sunday Morning Message

January 6, 2024

Vision Night

Walk Thou Before Me and Be Thou Perfect

Text – Philippians 3:13 – 16; Genesis 17:1

Introduction

Last Sunday evening we introduced our theme verses for the year:

"13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (Philippians 3:13-15)

You will notice Paul's statement in v. 15, "as many as be perfect." In our daily devotional readings this week, we read a similar statement regarding Abraham:

"1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." (Genesis 17:1)

The more I read, however, and the more I pondered the statement, "be thou perfect," the more other verses started popping into my mind regarding what God said to Abraham in verse Genesis 17:1. God gave me three other verses in connection to that statement. I'll give you the verses as God gave them to me, and then try to make an application from the text:

"48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

"20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

"18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

Getting back to the word, "perfect." The word, "perfect," is found in the Bible many times in connection to the life of a believer, or the lives (plural) of believers. I did a search on Blue Letter Bible and saw that many of the uses of the word, "perfect" involved the heart of a believer the Bible indicates many times that various believers were "perfect," or had a perfect heart, or could have a perfect heart. But what does that mean? We know that we are not perfect, at least how we understand the meaning of the word today. We use the word "perfect" today to indicate something or somebody that is completely flawless,

without any errors or blemishes. None of us qualifies to meet that definition. Ecclesiastes 7:20 (above) clearly teaches that none of us is perfect in that way.

So, what does it mean to be “perfect” the way the Bible means it? In the New Testament, the Greek adjective, τέλειος (*teleios*) is often translated into the English word, “perfect.” Strong’s Concordance and Thayer’s Lexicon both describe the meaning as being “mature,” or “of full age.” So the word, “perfect,” does not mean sinless; it means full grown or mature. The Bible states that after we have been saved for a while we should no longer be “babes” in Christ (1 Corinthians 3; Hebrews 5). Too many believers never grow up spiritually. God wants us to be “perfect,” or mature spiritually. He commands it (Matthew 5:48). He wants us to “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” Growth means that we are moving forward toward maturity.

The secret to growth is continuing to walk with the Lord. Notice that God told Abraham to “walk before [him].” Walking with God involves being in communion with Him in prayer through reading the Scriptures and through obeying and serving Him. At the start of this New Year, try to determine that you are going to walk with the Lord continuously – daily – throughout the year. Start your day with the Scriptures and prayer, and then pray without ceasing throughout the day. You will never be completely perfect (sinless), but we can become more perfect, more mature, more full-grown spiritually.

Positionally, all believers are seen by God as completely righteous and perfect because of the blood of Christ (Genesis 7:1; Romans 3:21 – 22). However, the idea here is not justification, but rather sanctification.

“9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.” (2 Corinthians 13:9)

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Financially – God has blessed the church tremendously financially. We finished the New Year almost \$4,000.00 above budget in income. Though we have not yet closed out December spending, I estimate that we will be about \$3,000.00 below budget in spending, which means that we will finish the year with approximately a \$7,000.00 budget surplus.

We also took in \$37,000.00 for missions, which was an increase of \$14,500.00 from 2022.

We also took in \$67,000.00 in offerings for the building.

Our total offerings for the year were \$355,000.00, which was up \$41,000.00 from 2022.

Attendance

Average total attendance was 178 from 144 last year. 2019 was the last pre-Covid year we had, and the attendance was 174 then. So, we have surpassed where we were pre-Covid.

A large part of our success was the Kid's Club Program, which has dramatically increased our Wednesday night attendances.

An area that remains weak is the Sunday School ministry, which has increased from around 60 in 2022 to 80 in 2023, but it is nowhere near what it was pre-Covid. I still believe in the value and potential of Sunday School.

What's in store for 2024?

1. Finish the building and figure out how we can best put it to use.

The new building consists of: a main fellowship hall, a large classroom, a nursery, a conference room, a closet which is the same size as the conference room, which we may adapt for use as another meeting room or office space. There is a kitchen, four single bathrooms, and lots of hallway space, which can be creatively used.

Lots of what we have planned for 2024, is predicated upon the completion of the building.

The goal is to get the building done within the next few weeks. Primarily, the building will be used for Nursery, Junior church, Children's Sunday School, Wednesday Kid's Club, and the Christian School. There will also be a conference room for discipleship and small meetings or adult classes.

The new building will free up the existing auditorium for other things. The kids will not need this room for the school, for Kid's Club, or for Children's Sunday School so we will be able to put this to good use in addition to using it for services.

It is going to take us a little while to figure out exactly how we are going to efficiently use that building and for that reason, we are not launching any major new programs for 2024. The goal for *Moving Forward* is to learn this building and adapt it to the ministries we are currently operating. Please be patient while we are figuring it out.

2. Every Member Involved in the Ministry

Even without starting new ministries, the existing ministries that we have are stretched thin, and with the additional space and added attendance, we are going to have to get everyone involved.

We need to make sure that every member is discipled, trained, and put into service where their gifts can best be put to good use.

3. Deacon Caring Ministry (for lack of a better name)

We also now have four deacons, which is the most that we have ever had. The deacons will help with many administrative areas of the church, but their main duties will involve ministering and serving the families of the church. At this week's deacons' meeting, we will

be assigning these four men with families that they will be checking in on periodically and building relationships with so that they can minister to their needs.

4. New Sunday School Classes

- a. Because of the increased number of children, we will likely be adding at least one more children's class this year after the building is finished. Jesse and Justin will be assessing the need there and deciding as to the age divisions and space allocation.
- b. We will also be starting a new senior saints Sunday School class. The Camillo's have taken over the Omega Ministry, which is a senior's fellowship for people over 55. This new Sunday School class will be associated with that ministry in the same way that the ladies' fellowships are tied to the Daughters of the King Class, and the teen ministry and teen class are tied together.

There is a large, untapped group of seniors in our area, which need to reach with gospel. Once we get the new building up and running, we will co-ordinate this new class with the 8:30 service and try to build the Omega Ministry. The class will likely be held in the auditorium. However, we will continue to use Wimberg building for the other classes. It will not have one teacher. Instead, we will use several men on a rotating basis.

- 5. Berean Bible Institute** – For the last three years, we have been using the Faith Bible Institute program. Beginning in September, the Lord willing, Paul Meyer, and I will be starting the Berean Bible Institute. We have not worked out all the details yet, but I can tell you this, it will expositoryly cover every book of the Bible, and systematically deal with every major Bible doctrine. There will also be some leadership classes and practical classes. It will be a four-year program; three credits per thirteen-week semester; four semesters per year.

We are going to try to not utilize an extra night of the week to provide this. We are going to combine in-person classes with an online backup for people who miss class or cannot attend due to other ministry responsibilities. We will use the Sunday School timeframe, and possibly the Wednesday evening time, either before or during the Bible Study. We may even use a Sunday evening time before the service. We have a lot of details to work out, so there will be more information coming in the next few months.

Question – What if I want to attend the Bible institute and another Sunday School class? Because of the online option, you will be able to do this. You can also attend another adult class (or no class) and still be part of the Omega ministry.