

1 **Chadwick Samuel**
2 **Christian Perfection**

3
4 **The Setting**

5
6 *The Tabernacle Conference, Atlanta, Ga., March 8-18, 1906.*
7

8 *For the past seven years Dr. Len G. Broughton has conducted an Interdenominational Bible*
9 *Conference at his Tabernacle every March. It has been his plan from the first to engage the best*
10 *Bible expositors he could find in this country and abroad. The movement has been greatly*
11 *blessed of God. From year to year it has grown until it is now one of the most important*
12 *conferences in all the country. Representative Christian workers from all the Southern states and*
13 *from many of the states in the North and West attend these conferences from year to year.*
14

15 *The conference this year, which closed March 18, was one of the best ever held. Never before in*
16 *its history has the attendance been so large, and the work of the teachers and expositors was*
17 *equal to the very best. Six services were held each day for ten days, and the house remained full*
18 *practically all the time. Following is the list of speakers: Rev. Samuel Chadwick, Leeds,*
19 *England; Dr. James M. Gray, Chicago; Dr. Arthur T. Pierson, Brooklyn; Dr. A. C. Dixon,*
20 *Boston; Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, Princeton, N. J.; Rev. Melvin E. Trotter, Grand Rapids, Mich.;*
21 *Dr. H. M. Hamill, Nashville, Term.; Mr. Marshall A. Hudson, Syracuse, N. Y.; Miss May N.*
22 *Blodgett, Atlanta, Ga., Miss Ellen M. Stone, Chelsea, Mass.*
23

24 *Perhaps the leading spirit of the conference was the Rev. Samuel Chadwick. He spoke twice*
25 *every day, at 11: 00 A. M. and at 7:30 p. M. His messages were received from first to last with*
26 *great satisfaction. Mr. Chadwick remained in the South, speaking at different important centers*
27 *until about the middle of April. The Southern people greatly enjoyed Mr. Chadwick, and long for*
28 *him to return and be with them again.*
29
30

31 **Christian Perfection**

32
33 There is probably no subject Christian teachers touch so reluctantly as that of Christian
34 perfection. This is due partly to the difficulties of definition, and partly to the fact that it lays one
35 wide open to misunderstanding. A sharp shaft of ridicule may be more damaging than logic. An
36 argument can be met, but there is no answer to a sneer, and the fear of being thought a Pharisee
37 has silenced many on the subject of perfection. A still deeper reason for reluctance **is the**
38 **conscious gulf that lies between the doctrine and experience. It is not easy to urge others to**
39 **perfection while our own lives fall short;** and it is easy to take refuge in the differences and
40 inconsistencies of those who profess it, and hold our peace Such silence is neither courageous
41 nor guiltless; for while there may be but little hope of agreement in definition, **there can be no**
42 **doubt that the Scriptures speak of a perfection that is both attainable and imperative.**
43

44 The Scriptures command perfection, promise perfection, and give examples of perfection. **God**
45 **does not mock us with impossible commands. For every demand He makes there is**
46 **adequate grace supplied. A command is the reverse side of a promise, and a promise the**

47 **reverse side of a command.** Every obligation is a privilege, and every privilege an obligation.
48 Noah, Abraham, and Job are all spoken of as perfect before God, and St. Paul exhorts the perfect
49 in his Epistle to the Philippians. It will readily be objected that these men were far from perfect.
50 Noah got drunk, Abraham told lies, and Job said some bitter things in his affliction, though he
51 held to his integrity with remarkable tenacity. Even St. Paul in the same chapter where he speaks
52 of the perfect, says of himself, "Not that I have already attained, or am already made perfect."
53

54 **There is an imperfect perfection. All perfection is relative, except the perfection of God.**
55 **Christian perfection does not indicate finality but fitness. A thing may be very imperfect as**
56 **compared with its ultimate development, and yet be perfect in its present stage.** Noah, we
57 are told, was perfect in his generation, and it would be unfair to judge him by any other. The
58 Sermon on the Mount corrects the deliverance of Sinai, but the law of Sinai was perfect for its
59 time and work. A child may be perfect as a child, but very imperfect judged by the manhood it
60 will ultimately reach. In the endless progression of the Christian life every goal is a fresh starting
61 point. **Christian perfection is neither absolute nor angelic, and to complete the orthodox**
62 **round, neither is it Adamic, but Christian.**
63

64 65 **The Meaning of Perfection** 66

67 **Much of the difficulty concerning the subject has arisen from a confusion of terms. There is**
68 **a perfection that is future and final, and there is a perfection that is practical and present.**
69 In the original Scriptures the two kinds of perfection are distinguished by the use of different
70 words, but the English unfortunately has but one word for both. Our conceptions of the practical
71 and present perfection will be simplified if we study the word in its non-doctrinal application.
72 The Jewish law required of traders, "a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure." That
73 is plain enough. Every purchaser believes in perfection behind the counter. In the Old Testament
74 it is said of several kings that they did right, but not with a perfect heart. Their righteousness fell
75 short of the standard measurement, and in every case their deficiency arose from lack of moral
76 and spiritual qualities. The heart was divided.
77

78 **In the New Testament one of the words translated perfect is used of mending nets,** adjusting
79 worlds, arranging harmony in music, repairing a fault, fitting to parts, and supplying deficiencies.
80 **The fisherman has no difficulty in understanding perfection as applied to his nets. They**
81 **must be made fit for their purpose.** The engineer knows the need for perfection in fitting part
82 to part, if his machinery is to do its work. The musician understands the necessity for balance
83 and proportion in the preparation of harmony. The pedestrian needs limbs perfect in their
84 soundness, and must have the dislocated joint put right if he is to walk. The whole body has to be
85 perfectly jointed if it is to do its work, and nothing can be perfect while any lack remains. **To**
86 **make perfect, therefore, means to make fit, to put in order, adjust, adapt, arrange, and**
87 **equip, so as to secure effectiveness and efficiency for the result to be achieved.** Whatever is
88 perfect must be without deficiency, without division, without admixture of alien elements.
89

90 **The meaning is the same when applied to Christian life and experience. It is the**
91 **adjustment, cleansing, and equipment of man's nature for all the purposes of the life in**
92 **Christ. It is nothing more than making fit in every part to do the will of God.** Everything

93 that hinders and dislocates is taken away, the powers of mind, heart, and body are restored to
 94 their true order; and every need of grace and power is supplied. **There is no deficiency, no**
 95 **disorder, no discord ; the man of God is made perfect for, and in the will of, God.** Wesley's
 96 definition is short, simple and scriptural, "**Pure love alone reigning in the heart and life, this is**
 97 **the whole of Christian perfection.**"

100 **All the Elements of Christian Character**
 101 **Are Set Forth in the Scriptures**
 102 **As Capable of Perfection**

104 The elements that make up Christian character are Faith, Hope, Love; and each of these may be
 105 perfect.

107 **1. Faith.**

108
 109 "Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is
 110 lacking in your faith." **Their faith was deficient. It lacked something, but whatever it was in**
 111 **which they fell short, it was capable of being supplied.** It is not unlikely the apostle anticipated
 112 this perfecting in the prayer: "And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your
 113 spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus
 114 Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it" (1 Thess. v. 23, 24). "Thou seest that
 115 faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect" (Jas. ii. 22). **The point**
 116 **common to both these passages is that faith may be perfect. It may be made perfect by**
 117 **instruction, as in the case of the Thessalonians, or by works, as in the teaching of St. James.**
 118 Whatever the process of perfecting, the perfect is possible. Life may be lived without doubt,
 119 without wavering, and without unbelief. At all times and in all things, the heart may be fully
 120 assured in the truth and will of God.

122 **2. Hope.**

123
 124 "Be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation
 125 of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter i. 13). **In ver. 21, faith and hope are joined together, but hope comes**
 126 **after faith. Faith plants its feet securely upon the certainties of the Word. It examines,**
 127 **proves, and stakes everything upon assured truth. It builds on the rock.** Hope gives wings to
 128 the soul. It dwells in the future. Its home is within the veil. **Though billows and darkness be on**
 129 **every side, hope soars above them all, and out-flying the storm, dwells in the calm of**
 130 **eternal day. It is not riotous, unbridled imagination, but a sure and certain hope born of a**
 131 **clear and proved conviction of the soul.** We are begotten "unto living hope by the resurrection
 132 of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not
 133 away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a
 134 salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." This living hope may be set perfectly on the
 135 grace that is to be revealed at the revelation of Jesus Christ. An unquenchable, eternal, perfect
 136 hope!

139 **3. Love.**

140

141 "Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because
 142 as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear:
 143 because fear hath punishment: and he that feareth is not made perfect in love." "Thou shalt love
 144 the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." "Above all
 145 things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." **Love made perfect! Heart, soul, and**
 146 **mind cleansed from every defilement, united and harmonized, every part enthused with**
 147 **holy fervor and reverent devotion! When love is perfect there is no fear because there is no**
 148 **sense of guilt, no unrest because no strife, no coldness because no sin.** The soul made perfect
 149 in love is delivered from all that separated it from God and divided man's nature against itself. It
 150 is restored and sanctified, renewed and adjusted, cleansed and filled with the presence of God.
 151 **Love reigns, love radiates, love inspires, love transforms.** Love is the sum of duty and the
 152 inspiration of life.

153

154 Perfect faith; perfect hope; perfect love; these make the perfect man in the stature of the fullness
 155 of Christ.

156

157 **This perfection is guaranteed as a definite and present experience. It is not the**
 158 **consummation of the Christian life, but its condition.** The perfecting of the saints at Christ's
 159 appearing is an altogether different matter. That is the end of our faith; this is its preparation for
 160 the life of obedience in the will of God. It is the sanctification, adjustment, and equipment of
 161 man's nature that he may be a fit temple of an indwelling God, made meet for a life of holy
 162 fellowship, and an efficient instrument for holy service; and **since the Christian life has to be**
 163 **lived in the present world, the perfection is for present experience and work. It is not final**
 164 **but initiatory, not beyond the possibility of development but essentially progressive.** Surely
 165 no man will say God is not able to cleanse perfectly, renew entirely, and endue completely, every
 166 part of man redeemed by His grace, and surrendered to His will. We have a Saviour who "is able
 167 to save to the uttermost," and "to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all
 168 sufficiency in everything may abound unto every good work." **He is a perfect Deliverer; Jesus**
 169 **Christ is a perfect Saviour, and the Spirit is a perfect Sanctifier, Sustainer, and**
 170 **Strengtheners in the heart of man.** Perfection is possible because it is the work of the perfect
 171 and infinite God.

172

173

174 **Christian Perfection Experienced in the Heart**
 175 **is Manifest in the Life**

176

177 "By their fruits ye shall know them." **True perfection of faith, hope, and love bears fruit unto**
 178 **perfection in the graces of the Christian life. The fitness of machinery is proved in its**
 179 **working.** The profession of efficiency must be tested by results. Does the perfecting of grace in
 180 the soul result in perfection in the practical outworking of the daily life? Here again the meaning
 181 of the term must be kept in mind. **Christian perfection does not mean faultlessness but**
 182 **blamelessness. It does not mean that a thing has reached the excellence beyond which there**
 183 **is no possibility of improvement, but that the work is perfect in motive, and perfect**
 184 **according to the capacity of the worker.** That an act is perfect in this sense implies that it is

185 simple in aim, and faithful in execution. So with the Christian graces in the man made perfect.
 186 They lack no essential quality, and are adequate to the strain that is put upon them. Every
 187 exercise develops and improves them, but they are sufficient for immediate demand.
 188

189 **1. The first-fruit of the threefold perfection of Faith, Hope, and Love is Patience.**
 190

191 "Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." In 1
 192 Thess. i. 3, the patience of hope follows the work of faith and the labor of love. **Patience is the**
 193 **child of the three graces. The secret of patience is love, hopefulness and confidence. Where**
 194 **any one of these elements is lacking, patience will be wanting**, but where these are, patience
 195 will have its perfect work; and surely we have need of patience.
 196

197 The Christian made perfect in faith, hope, and love will be perfect in his patience with God.
 198 Jonah is not the only servant of the Lord who has got angry with his God. Neither is the
 199 impatient zeal of James and John which would invoke the consuming fires of heaven unknown
 200 among us. The long-suffering forbearance of God provokes earnest souls to impatience. The
 201 utter absence of divine interference with tragedy and suffering and the apparent indifference of
 202 the Eternal to helpless anguish, wring the cry from the heart, Where is God? As the earnest
 203 reformer broods over the appalling scenes that confront him, and listens to heartbreaking stories
 204 of cruelty and blood, he is driven to wonder how God can sit in the heavens and witness such
 205 wretchedness and suffering. The massacre of helpless women and the butchery of little children;
 206 treachery, bloodshed, hypocrisy and devilry lie open to His omniscient gaze. We look up to the
 207 stars from the weltering mass of moaning humanity, and wonder why He does not step out from
 208 the heavens and break the forces of wickedness in pieces. We would. Who has not clenched his
 209 fist in the presence of monstrous iniquity and vowed what he would do if he were God? **He is**
 210 **mercifully patient with our impatience, and when our anger is spent, and we have sobbed**
 211 **out our grief, He lulls the disquieted soul to rest like a tired child. Then faith returns to its**
 212 **moorings, hope spreads its wings again, and love waits in patience for the coming of the**
 213 **Lord.** Though the kingdom of God come slowly and all things seem to continue as they were,
 214 we know that He who cannot lie has sworn to His Son that He shall have the nations for His
 215 inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession; and though we see not yet all
 216 things subjected to Him, we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor. In that vision faith rests,
 217 hope sings, and love waits.
 218

219 In every lot we have need of patience. St. James exhorts us to take the prophets "for an example
 220 of suffering and of patience," reminding us that we call them blessed which endured, and have
 221 seen the end of the Lord, how that He is full of pity, and merciful. There were times when even
 222 men of faith could not sing. They hanged their harps on the willows of their grief. But they
 223 always had hope. They hung up their harps but they did not break them, nor sell them, nor fling
 224 them away: they simply hung them up till their hearts could sing again. Things are hung up to be
 225 taken down again. You cannot bear the music to-day, but the song will return, and you will yet
 226 praise Him Who is the health of your countenance and your God. In such seasons "let us hold
 227 fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised." **It is in patient**
 228 **endurance that the soul is won and the promise received. There is no interpreter of life's**
 229 **mysteries like patience. To them that wait upon the Lord, that do not hurry in their**
 230 **impatience, there shall be given strength and light, and joy. Grace will enable them to be**

231 **patient under provocation that is malicious and unjust.** Read the words of St. Peter: "For
 232 what glory is it, if when ye sin and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? But if ye do well,
 233 and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." When people are
 234 unreasonable, unjust, and ungrateful, when the more you try the more they grumble, the perfect
 235 life is patient even then. The crowning mark of the perfection of the patience of the life made
 236 perfect is in the passage: "Walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every
 237 good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power according to
 238 the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks unto the
 239 Father." Patience and longsuffering with joy and thanksgiving! That surely is the hallmark of
 240 perfect patience.

241
 242 **2. Perfect Obedience to the Will of God.**

243
 244 Holiness is the objective of grace. Adjustment and cleansing, divine indwelling and inworking
 245 are all for the purpose of holiness of heart and righteousness of life. Goodness is the goal of all
 246 God's working. Faith is made perfect by its works; hope purifies by its vision; and love not only
 247 keeps the commandments but sets them to music. "That ye may stand perfect and fully assured in
 248 all the will of God." "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable teaching, for reproof, for
 249 correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete (A. V.
 250 perfect), furnished completely unto every good work." "Now the God of peace, who brought
 251 again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even
 252 our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is
 253 well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

254
 255 **Perfect and fully assured in all the will of God; perfect, furnished completely unto every**
 256 **good work; perfect in every good thing to do His will. Christian perfection means that a**
 257 **man lives in the assurance of God's approval, that he is equipped and abounds in good**
 258 **works, and that his outward life is inspired and energized by an indwelling and inworking**
 259 **God.** He not only does the will of God; he revels in it; it is his meat and drink. **He not only**
 260 **abstains from evil, he abounds in goodness. He not only attains to holiness, but in his virtue**
 261 **there is the spontaneity of life and the ease of power. Beware of all teaching of perfection**
 262 **divorced from obedience. Faith that makes void the law, hope that does not purify, and**
 263 **love that does not keep the commandments, are a blasphemy and a lie.** The soul made
 264 perfect in grace dwells in God and obeys His will. Business, friendship, home, pleasure, and all
 265 else are adjusted to His mind and maintained according to His pleasure. Such perfect obedience
 266 is only possible to perfect faith, perfect hope, and perfect love; but to faith, hope, and love all
 267 things are possible.

268
 269 **3. A Perfect Tongue.**

270
 271 "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man." "Trifles make perfection, and
 272 perfection is no trifle," says Michael Angelo. **Perfection in all God's work extends to all the**
 273 **minutia of His operations. He takes the same infinite pains over an insect's wing as in the**
 274 **making of a planet.** The test of perfection is in its perfection of finish. **The perfection of the**
 275 **perfect man finds its test in his speech. The tongue reveals the heart. It gives form and**
 276 **expression to the hidden things of the soul,—**"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth

277 speaketh." "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
 278 Who can keep his tongue? The hasty, thoughtless, idle, false, and fiery words slip off so easily. It
 279 is a little member, but it has tremendous power, and is very difficult to control. It can only be
 280 cleansed and kept from within. **A clean tongue is possible only to a clean heart, and a perfect**
 281 **tongue only to a perfect man.** Here, again, salvation is in faith, hope, and charity. Evil speaking
 282 is a special snare to those who have received special gifts of grace. Censoriousness is the
 283 besetting sin of the sanctified. A watch, therefore, should be set upon the lips, for no man is
 284 perfect whose tongue is not kept from evil. Christian perfection magnifies the grace of God that
 285 is able to keep from stumbling in word as well as in deed.

286
 287 **4. Perfect Peace.**

288
 289 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."
 290 What a promise! Perfect peace! Who can fathom its depth and meaning? And yet, it is the natural
 291 result of adjustment, adaptation, and power. What is peace but the stillness of harmony,
 292 proportion, and balance? When there is peace it means that all the varying forces have been so
 293 blended as to become a unit. It is the stillness and stability which is the perfection of energy. The
 294 earth is still because of its velocity. Its stability is in its speed. **So in the man made perfect. His**
 295 **nature is unified and harmonized with God. All the forces that center in the heart are so**
 296 **subjected, balanced, unified, and kept, that there is unbroken, eternal, and perfect peace.**
 297 **Perfect peace!** No friction, no controversy, no strife, no shrinking, no strain, no coercion, no
 298 condemnation! Peace, perfect peace! It is a blessed cloudless life of unbroken harmony. Peace
 299 for all time and all the time, so perfect that neither earth nor hell can disturb it, as unchanging
 300 and abiding as the God of peace from Whom it comes. This also is the fruit of perfect faith,
 301 perfect hope, and perfect love. Without these there can be no peace, but where these are perfect,
 302 perfect peace abides.

303
 304
 305 **"If Thou Wouldest Be Perfect!"**

306
 307 For such a life among the redeemed who has not sighed and prayed? Not only for perfection,
 308 which shall be ours when we see Jesus face to face in the Father's house, but for the life of
 309 patience, obedience, victory, and peace in this present life, our hearts have cried with agony and
 310 tears. **To-day the Saviour looks and challenges us to perfection. The very "if," assumes the**
 311 **possibility. He takes no low views of the possibilities of grace. His call is to perfection. How**
 312 **then may we attain unto a life so glorious?** We must remember that it is not by law. "The law
 313 made nothing perfect." Neither is it by anything we offer to God. Gifts and sacrifices cannot
 314 make the worshiper perfect. Perfection is neither by the law of Moses, nor by the law of the
 315 sanctuary. **It is the work and gift of God, and can only become ours by *Consecration*,**

316
 317
 318 **Cleansing and Indwelling**

319
 320 1. "If thou wouldest be perfect, go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have
 321 treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." **That is the first great commandment of the perfect**
 322 **life: absolute and unconditional surrender of the whole life to God.**

323
324 2. "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of
325 flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." **After surrender, cleansing.** The temple
326 of the Lord must be clean before it can be filled with the glory of His presence.

327
328 3. "Now the God of peace make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us
329 that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." "Christ liveth in me." **After**
330 **cleansing, indwelling. The life is not the life of the perfect man, but of the perfect Christ**
331 **who dwells and works in the soul by His Spirit. It is God's work.** "The God of all grace
332 shall himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you." It is the work of the perfect Worker, and every
333 one whom He perfects shall be as his Master. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do
334 it," and when He has done it, we need not proclaim it, for perfection, above all things, cannot be
335 hid.

336
337 Taken from *Record of Christian Work*, Vol. XXV, 1906, Edited and Published W. Moody, East
338 Northfield, MA, pp. 318-323

339
340 Find more resources on this subject at path2prayer.com