

God's Love in an Imperfect World

For many of us, the idea of a perfect world is an ideal not a reality. Once we could name where sin was most prevalent. We might call Las Vegas Sin City or we might look to Hollywood for leading the way on presenting sinful behavior and life styles. We, in that context, could see that other places might be less sinful and by contrast be considered closer to perfect.

Sadly, those days are gone. We may blame any number of causes but the fact is that sin is prevalent everywhere. We no longer live in a perfect world. In fact, Paul summed up our state well when he quoted from two different Psalms (Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3) and wrote:

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.” (Romans 3:10-12 NASB)

We could easily become very negative in our outlook on life. I know that I have told the joke about mules being Christians because they have such long faces before. Perhaps we allow our negative views to sour our disposition.

The apostle Paul certainly faced difficult situations and endured many harsh treatments. He was in prison as he wrote these words to the church in Philippi: **Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4 NASB)** Encouraging people to rejoice does not sound like a person with a negative attitude.

Given that we live in a world that is not perfect how should we live? How should we allow the imperfect surroundings to affect us? Is it possible for us to be perfect? If so, what am I doing wrong?

The main scripture this week is found in 2 Corinthians the 13th chapter. I will read this from three different translations. The reason is that one word is translated differently in many English translations. The Greek word is one that has multiple meanings and its usage needs to be based on context. For some, this may be too technical and not worth the effort. Perhaps you are right. But think about words that we hear apart from the Bible. We realize that the context helps us understand their meaning. These two words that we hear apart from the Bible and realize the context shapes the meaning. For example, I will share two words that we hear with multiple meanings. First is the word shalom. It is a Hebrew word that many recognize as the word for peace. It is also used as a greeting of salutation (hello or good-bye). It is like the other word we consider aloha. Again, the Hawaiian word used to say hello or good-bye. It all depends on context. So, with this little word study complete, let's read through our scripture for today. It is found, as we said earlier, in 2 Corinthians 13.

We will read first from the King James Version beginning with the 11th verse of the 13th chapter of 2 Corinthians.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Greet one another with an holy kiss.

All the saints salute you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:11-14 KJV)

Next, we will read this same passage from the New American Standard Bible.

Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:11-14 NASB)

Finally, we will read a direct translation from Greek (an inter-linear translation).

Finally, brothers, rejoice, strive for maturity, take courage. Be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send you their greetings. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:11-14 Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament (MOUNCE))

You may have notice that some of the words are different. The first word that was different was farewell or rejoice. Oddly, the Greek word used here may be translated either way. It is the same word that is found in Philippians 4:4: **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4 NASB)** At times, it may be used as a salutation (good-bye or farewell). The **finally** at the beginning of this sentence and went with farewell. However, the meaning is not significantly changed to use rejoice. This is not the word that I want to spend too much time with. There is another word that catches my attention this morning. The word that I want us to focus on this morning is **perfect**. In the King James Version, we are admonished to **Be perfect**. We are humans and we live in an imperfect world. As humans, we are imperfect. We are subject to our individual weaknesses and we, at times are led astray. Perhaps a better phrase is that we are lured astray. That word-perfect may cause us to throw up our hands in despair. I cannot be perfect while I live on this earth. If I cannot be perfect, then how do I have any hope of being perfect in the presence of God?

Let's take a few minutes here to consider the original word that is translated as perfect by the King James Translators. The original Greek word used $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ which is transliterated as *katartizo* (kat-ar-tid'-zo). It is a compound word and the root word $\acute{\alpha}\rho\tau\iota\omicron\varsigma$ or *artios* (ar'-tee-os). The meaning of the root word is fresh, i.e. (by implication) complete: — perfect. The meaning of the compound word is to complete thoroughly, i.e. repair (literal or figurative) or adjust: — fit, frame, mend, (make) perfect (-ly join together), prepare, restore. (Both definitions are from Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary)

The point of all this technical detail about the various translations and the original text with the shades of meaning is to help us see the word perfect and realize that it is more of a process than a fixed quality. When Paul writes to **Be perfect**, he is saying we are to grow into this perfection. We are to be repaired or adjusted. The New American Standard Bible tells us **be made complete** and the direct translation tells us to **strive for maturity**.

Our growth toward the complete maturity (perfection) is coupled with the assurance: **The God of love and peace will be with you**. We realize that we live in an imperfect world and we are imperfect creatures. So, how does God work in and through us in this maturing or completion process?

When we look at the process of salvation, we can identify certain characteristics of God. The most noted is love. God has showered His love on all humanity. God wants to us to share this love on multiple levels. In fact, His whole purpose in creating the cosmos is precisely for this reason, to share His divine love with others.

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1 John 3:1 NASB)

This love that come from God should flow through us as a mark that we are of God.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:7-8 NASB)

It is God's desire that everyone come under the umbrella of His love and salvation. Paul tells us this in his first letter to Timothy where we read: **This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3-4 NASB)**

God's love is again demonstrated in the role of Jesus (God the son).

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NASB)

According to the words of Jesus, His mission was aligned with the desire of God that we have just considered. Listen to the words of Jesus found in Luke 19:10: **For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10 NASB)**

God's love reconciles us, in our imperfection, to Him, who is perfect. **Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NASB)**

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Romans 5:8-9 NASB)

God's love has a cost. For God, it cost His son: **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NASB)**

God's love is a renewing love: **For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, (Romans 8:29a NASB)**

Our growing into maturity or perfection involves the love of God as manifested in all three persons of the God-head: **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.**

If there is anyone here today that does not know the love of God and the salvation we have through His son, now is the time accept His grace.