

Complete in Him

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 July 2019

Preacher: Rev. Iain Thomson

[0 : 00] And let's now turn to the book of Psalms, Psalm 138, Psalm 138. Psalm 138.

Psalm 139.

For they have heard the words of your mouth, and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord. For great is the glory of the Lord. For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly.

But the haughty he knows from afar. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life.

You stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me.

The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me. Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

[1 : 37] I want to think particularly on the words that we have in verse 8. The Lord will fulfill his purposes for me.

Fulfill his purpose for me. When we come to consider God, we very often think of him as a great God who's only concerned with doing great things.

And we very rarely think that he's really all that concerned with us.

Because we're so small and insignificant. Yet the psalmist was aware that he was concerned for him.

The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me. And the goal that God has for all of his people is that they will all be made perfect.

[2 : 48] Because when he created us, that's how he did create us. He created us perfect in his own image.

Now, perfection is what is aimed at in the process of sanctification. A sinner saved by grace very often thinks that once he's saved, that he will progress towards perfection.

But as we grow in our knowledge and in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we're led to understand just how imperfect we really are.

And it's only as we draw closer to God that we see more of our own imperfections. Yet the Lord has vowed to fulfill his purpose for every one of us.

A sinner is wholly justified by faith. When he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, justification is a legal act which affects our standing before God.

[4 : 17] And it's complete at that moment. It will never be more perfect than it is the moment that we believe. We will never be more justified than what we are.

So, our justification is complete. It is perfect. But our sanctification, however, is a process.

And it will never be complete in this world. There is a growth in grace and the knowledge of God.

There is an advancement of holiness and purity.

But as I said very often, we think that it's the other way around. That the more we progress, the more unholy and impure we become.

We have always been that. It's just that we are now becoming more and more aware of it. As long as something is growing, there is no absolute perfection.

[5 : 32] In the case of a corn, there is first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. But the blade, as soon as it appears above the soil, has the promise of reaching perfection.

Of reaching completeness. Now, the same is true of all the animals. It's true of ourselves. We're born as helpless infants.

But as a helpless infant, there is the promise of a full-grown manhood in the future.

And the development of an infant is evident, or maybe not so evident from day to day, but there is evidence that there is growth in an infant's life.

There is that general tendency within everything that is young and at an infant stage, that it's going to grow to completeness or to perfection.

[6 : 47] Now, the child himself is probably not aware of that growth. In fact, my memories of childhood is that I wouldn't grow up quick enough.

You're longing as a child until you grow up. And you feel the time so long. A year in a child's life is probably like 10 or 20 years in our lives at the stage that we've reached now.

He feels that he's not progressing as fast as he would like to. And that he's not growing up like he would like to because he's not seen the progress.

But if somebody who hasn't seen him for a while meets up with them, relatives that are coming to visit, very often that's the first thing that they'll say to the child, my, how you're growing.

They see that there's growth, that there's development, and that the child is moving towards adulthood. He, the child is already perfect in nature, but not in degree.

[8 : 08] And so it is with the regenerated soul. The newborn child, his nature within him is perfect as an infant, but it's not yet attained to the measure and to the stature of adulthood.

And the same is true of every Christian. What Christ has regenerated within us is growing to perfection.

It is already perfect, but it's going to grow to completeness. The promise is there. The tendency is always onward.

Now, there can be times of spiritual sickness and backsliding, and the growth can be stunted for a while. But that which God has begun within us will progress.

He will bring it on, and he will complete that work. In spite of all the opposition, and in spite of all the imperfections that we become aware of, God will complete, God will perfect that which he has begun.

[9 : 35] He will give us grace, sufficient to meet all of our needs, until he brings us to glory. And until he says, as the psalmist says here, fulfill his purpose for me.

Well, what happens when we are brought to completeness? Well, a ripe corn, or any cereal, is cut down and gathered.

And so it is with the believers. When their sanctification is complete, their bodies will fall asleep in Jesus, and they will rest in the grave until the time of the resurrection.

But their souls are at that point made perfect and will immediately pass into glory. Now, to be made perfect in holiness is something that is beyond our understanding.

It is unspeakable mercy on God's part that he would make us perfect in holiness. But when we are made perfect in holiness, there will be a full capacity to enjoy perfection.

[11 : 07] But the fullness of that perfection must wait until the resurrection. For though the soul is made perfect in holiness, it is still lacking the perfect and glorified body that it will continue to wait for in glory.

And it's as if the soul is dissatisfied, although it's hard to use these words concerning the soul that's in glory, that there's any sense of dissatisfaction.

There is no dissatisfaction in glory, but there is a longing. There is a longing for the fullness. For the completeness of the redemption that Christ has purchased for his people.

The soul is longing for the glorified body to reunite with it. And that's what Paul tells us right into the Corinthians.

That this corruptible must put on incorruption. This mortal must put on immortality. Death shall be swallowed up in eternal victory.

[12 : 27] That will take place when Christ comes again. And everybody will receive it at exactly the same time. Every Christian from the beginning of time until the end of time will all rise together, along with the Christians that are yet living on the earth, they will all rise at the exact same moment.

Their glorified bodies coming out of the grave, the people who are still alive as they're ascending are undergoing a change and their physical mortal bodies are putting on immortality.

They are also being glorified as they ascend to meet the Lord in the air. And there is perfection on that day.

And that's the only day that we can say that his purposes for me have been completed. When Christ comes again.

When soul and body are reunited. And where we're fitted to enjoy the peace and the harmony and all that heaven contains for his people.

[13 : 48] Paul will never have to speak to us again through his word, through God's word, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

Because that warfare will then have completely ceased. Because God's work will have been completed.

And every glorified saint will be taken up with the praises of the one who redeemed them.

They will join in one chorus with the innumerable host that will be redeemed on that day.

And not only is each of them made perfect, being like Christ, but they will enjoy singing in perfect harmony with one another.

[14 : 51] Sometimes we complain about our singing here in this world because maybe we're not very good singers or maybe we're out of tune with some of the rest.

But on that day, every word and every note will be in perfect harmony. It will be in perfect harmony. It will all be to the glory of the Lamb who was slain and who has redeemed us.

Because we will see him as he is. And not only will we see him as he is, we will then begin to appreciate more fully than we ever anticipated here in this world what it is that we lost when sin entered into the experience of man.

Because then we will be like him. We will bear the image of God. This is the hope of the Christian.

Now John wrote in his epistle that we don't know yet what we're going to be.

Now that's John in his old age. Having gone through this process of sanctification from the time that he was a teenager. Saying at the end of his life we don't know yet what we're going to be like.

[16 : 15] But he was assured of this that when he appears we are going to be like him. There will be no more anger.

No more malice. No more misunderstandings. But a song of praise from every creature that has been redeemed.

Every one of God's children will unite together and they will be unanimous in their chorus. Which we have a part of it in the words of John in the Revelation.

Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us kings and priests to his God and Father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Then we go on to read at the end of the Revelation God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death neither sorrow nor crying neither shall there be any more pain for the former things have passed away.

[17 : 36] That was the hope of the psalmist. The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me.

It's not just for all the redeemed. It's for me. It's personal. It's a personal pronoun. He was taking this to himself. This is not just a great God who does great things concerning sovereignly ruling over the whole universe sovereignly ruling over this world that we live in who is concerned with the big things the earthquakes and all the big things that are evident.

But this is the God who is concerned with the minutest details in my life. He has worked all things together for my good.

He has fulfilled his purposes for me. This is the lesson that the Lord Jesus Christ was having to give to his disciples when he said have you considered the lilies of the field who neither toil nor spill?

Solomon in all of his glory didn't have the glory of these lilies. There are millions of lilies millions of flowers throughout the world but God is concerned with the minutest details of even the grass and the wild flowers that grow in the field.

[19 : 17] If he's not concerned with the minutest details of his creation how much more is he concerned about you?

Your very hairs are all numbered by him. If he knows every sparrow that falls to the ground do you not think that he's concerned with everything that troubles you and everything that needs to be perfected in you?

The Lord is concerned and the Lord the psalmist tells us here will fulfill his purposes for me and we all have to say that for ourselves.

It's not what he's going to do for the innumerable host that he's going to redeem. It's what he's going to do for me and I'm going to be united with that innumerable host in singing this glorious chorus to the one that has redeemed us by his own blood.

So when we're tried and we are tried we need to come to lay hold of these promises. We need to exercise our faith to get above the things that are troubling us.

[20 : 44] As Peter when he stepped out of the boat we need to look to him. We need to lay hold of what he's promised to do for us because if we're taken up by the trials the waves that are breaking over us we will sink under them.

Because the Christian is required to go through fire and water. It will not be easy for the Christian if he's going to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

so our faith needs to be exercised on what he is and what he's promised to do for me.

The Lord will fulfill his purposes for me. That brings us to the final point that I want to consider and that is to ask the question what are we going to do throughout all of eternity?

Well the simple answer to that is I don't know. Nobody knows. Because we haven't been given much detail about what we're going to be doing once Christ or once God has fulfilled his purposes for me.

[22 : 06] And I think probably the reason that we're not told is because we can't understand it. We haven't got the capacity yet to understand what we're going to do for all of eternity because our sinful nature has marred our faculties to the extent that we can't really appreciate it.

But from what we are told we can say one or two things. the power of the body and soul that has now been purified are now fit to enjoy the fullness that God is able to reveal to us.

We will appreciate it. In this life our knowledge of God is imperfect. even the person that has the greatest knowledge or the greatest or closest relationship with God the most advanced Christian in the world is still imperfect in his knowledge of God.

Possibly the most advanced Christian that we can think of was the Apostle Paul. And we read there in 1 Corinthians what he said for now we see in a mirror dimly but then we will see face to face now I know in part but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Knowing him as he is will fill us with an ever deepening sense of love and adoration for the God who has redeemed us.

[24 : 08] And that love will cast out all fear because in this world we are filled with fear. We have fear of man we have the fear of presuming we have the fear when we engage in religious activities and Satan is not slow to accuse us you are a hypocrite you don't believe a word that you are telling these people you are deceiving them because you know that you don't live up to these standards yourself and he at times would seek to paralyze you from proclaiming the truths that you want to proclaim concerning your Savior and this prevents us so often from speaking to our fellow human beings because we know how far short we come ourselves and we know that they could so easily turn around and say to us who are you to tell me because they know so much about our lives so there is the fear of man there is the fear of hypocrisy there is the fear of presuming that we are God's people that he is doing a work in our lives but there his love will cast out all of these fears and we will have no inhibitions we will just pour out our hearts to him and we will gladly give him every remnant of love that we find within our souls because we will see that he is worthy now we will know him and because we will know him perfectly we will love him perfectly and that will produce within us a joy unspeakable and full of glory we can have four tastes of that here and we know that it's precious it hastens us towards our goal now knowing

God in his grace and beauty having continued fellowship with him and loving him without fear with all the energy that a holy and a perfected human being will be will give us joy that is unspeakable and on that day God will look at us and John describes the eyes of Christ as a flame of fire he fell down before him as dead and we sometimes fear because we know that he's penetrating right into the very depths of our souls but on that day we will not fear because we know that he will be looking at his own perfect work he will see us in our completeness and we will not feel unworthy we will feel worthy of being loved because he will see nothing but that which can be loved unlike the way that he found us there was nothing that he could see in us that he served his love but on that day he will see nothing but that which attracts him to us and will attract us to him because we will see him and we've possibly used these words he is all together lovely and that's how we will see him we will see him in all of his glory and what a precious joy that will bring into the experience of our souls now these are precious truths that we have contained in God's word even although we here in this world see us through a mirror dimly yet to see them through a mirror dimly is more than what we deserved and if we've seen them as through a mirror dimly and we see a glimpse of the glory that lies behind that how much more glorious is it going to be when we shall see him as he is sometimes we feel well I can't lay hold a and I can't understand what you're talking about

I haven't yet experienced what you're describing here in this world well the good news is we don't have to understand it what we require to do is to believe it because whether we understand it or not he's going to complete it and the Christian who has an understanding and the one who has very little understanding are both going to be made complete because their completeness was not dependent upon them understanding it it was dependent on God's word promising it and his promise will be fulfilled so let us be encouraged in our faith to try and grasp it to encourage ourselves to look into this mirror that gives us a doom vision of what is yet to come and let us believe that whether we understand it or not that his word will not return unto him void it will fulfill what God has purpose to fulfill concerning me regardless of my understanding of it may God grant that he would bless to us these thoughts