

Session 10: Running for the Prize: Being Complete in Our Love

I. LOVING JESUS ON HIS TERMS: BY SEEKING TO OBEY HIM

- A. We can only love Jesus on His terms. He defined it as being rooted in a spirit of obedience. There is no such thing as loving God without sincerely seeking to obey His Word. Loving God requires more than having sentimental feelings about God.
- ¹⁵ If you love Me, keep My commandments ... ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me ... ²³ If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. (Jn. 14:15-23)*
- B. Expressing our love to Jesus includes denying lustful desires. Each of us has a different struggle according to our personality and circumstances. Thus, we each have a different **assignment** from which we offer our gift of love to God. Saying “no” to sin expresses love to Jesus.
- ³ This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. (1 Jn. 5:3)*
- C. Jesus called us to live perfectly by seeking to walk in all the light the Spirit gives us. We do this by reaching from our heart to live in hundredfold obedience in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Walking perfect in obedience to the light we receive is relative now and absolute in the next age.
- ⁴⁸ You shall be perfect [walk in all our light], just as your Father is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)*
- D. To reach for 100 percent obedience is different than attaining it in life. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to fully obey with confidence that God enjoys us.
- E. When we obey the Spirit’s light, then He gives us more light and more experience in God.
- ⁹ In Your light we see [more] light. (Ps. 36:9)*
- F. Enoch received the testimony that he pleased God by a lifestyle of comprehensive obedience. At the end of our natural lives, each of us will stand before Jesus to receive His testimony about our life. He will reveal to us the truth about the quality of our obedience and love. On that day, every one will long to hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mt. 25:21).
- ⁵ By faith Enoch...before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Heb. 11:5)*
- G. We are to ask the Lord for wisdom into areas we lack complete obedience in (v. 5). We ask the Lord to shock us now with insight into our lack of obedience instead of at the judgment seat. David asked the Lord for insight into areas in which he lacked complete dedication to Him.
- ³ The testing of your faith produces patience [perseverance]. ⁴ Let patience have its perfect work [mature impact in us], that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing [in our obedience]... ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask...and it will be given to him. (Jas 1:3-5)*
- ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; ²⁴ and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps. 139:23-24)*
- ¹² Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret [unperceived] faults. ¹³ Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins ... Then I shall be blameless. (Ps. 19:12-13)*

II. THE PRIZE: OUR TESTIMONY OF BEING COMPLETE IN LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

- A. The prize which Paul sought was to receive God's testimony about his life—that he walked in complete obedience. Paul's highest goal was to win the prize of presenting the testimony to Jesus on the last day that his obedience was complete and his love for Jesus was perfected.
- ²⁴ ... Those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it ... ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty [lack of focus] ... ²⁷ I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest ... I should become disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)*
- B. The prize involves offering to Jesus a life of complete obedience and then receiving His response, which includes eternal rewards that express how He feels about us loving Him in this way.
- C. Paul wrote towards the end of his life that he had not yet attained the prize of the testimony of perfect obedience. God's testimony about our life is not given until after we complete our race. Paul had several years before his race (life) was over. The prize of the upward call of God is to receive the testimony that we finished the race in full obedience thus, we receive a full reward.
- ¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected ... ¹³ I do not count myself to have apprehended ... ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God. (Phil. 3:12-14)*
- D. Paul was assured of the prize of the crown of righteousness as his race was nearing completion.
- ⁸ There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness ... on that Day. (2 Tim. 4:8)*
- E. We have a certain amount of years in this life to bring every area under the Spirit's leadership as our way of demonstrating our love to God. All who are wise will make this their greatest single goal for which they will gladly sacrifice pleasure, money, and even honor in ministry.
- F. The pursuit of complete or comprehensive obedience includes bridling our speech (Jas 3:2), making a covenant with our eyes and refusing to look on anything that stirs up lust (Job 31:1), disciplining our physical appetites, and managing our time (for service and prayer) and our money (to increase the kingdom beyond personal comfort).
- ² If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the ... body. (Jas 3:2)*
- ² I will behave wisely in a perfect way ... I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. ³ I will set nothing wicked before my eyes. (Ps. 101:2-3)*
- G. Power in our life is found in pursuing hundredfold obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly seek to walk in total obedience. The 98 percent pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing. The last 2 percent positions us to live with a vibrant heart.
- ⁵ Every thought into captivity ... when your obedience is fulfilled [complete, NIV]. (2 Cor. 10:5-6)*

- H. Maintaining a sustained reach for full obedience for decades is the definition of living radically before God. We are not radical because we do something unusual for a few weeks or months. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our life, we are not loved less by God, but we do suffer loss in minimizing the full gift of our love from this life to Jesus on the last day.
- I. God gives us many opportunities to make decisions that prove our love to Him. We will make wrong decisions we regret, yet we have opportunity to change them. If we make right decisions in obedience, He gives us many opportunities to confirm them, or prove them in our character.
³ *We exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope [confidence to receive the testimony]; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint [satisfied on the last day]. (Rom. 5:3-5, NAS)*
- J. Scripture presents two aspects of being complete before God. First, at the new birth, we are instantly made **complete in Christ** in our legal position (justification) because of Jesus' work on the cross. Second, we progressively become **complete in our obedience** in our living condition before God (sanctification). Both are foundational truths.
¹⁰ *You are complete in Him. (Col. 2:10)*
- K. There are different terms in Scripture for this truth of seeking to be complete in our obedience (2 Cor. 13:9, 11; Phil. 1:6; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 13:20-21; Jas. 1:4); perfect (Mt. 5:48; 19:21; Jn. 17:23; Gal. 3:3; Eph. 4:13. Col. 1:28; 1 Thes. 3:10; Jas. 2:22; 3:2; 1 Pet. 5:10; Rev. 3:2); mature (Phil. 3:15); blameless (Lk. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:6-8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thes. 3:13; 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:2, 10; 5:5-7; 6:14; 2 Pet. 3:14); without spot (Eph. 5:27); worthy (2 Thes. 1:5-12; Lk. 21:34-36; 20:35-36; Col. 1:9-10 Mt. 10:37-38; 22:8; Rev. 3:4-5; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thes. 2:12); stand (Lk. 21:36; 1 Cor. 10:13; 16:13; Eph. 6:10-14; Phil. 4:1; Col. 4:12; 1 Thes. 3:8; Rev. 6:17).
- L. Paul prayed and preached so that people would receive a testimony of complete obedience.
⁹ *This ... we pray, that you may be made complete... ¹¹ Finally...become complete. (2 Cor. 13:9-11)*
²⁸ *We preach, warning every man and teaching every man ... that we may present every man perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor. (Col. 1:28-29)*
- M. Paul prayed that people become complete in their responsiveness to the Spirit. To perfect what is lacking in their faith included being perfected in their heart responses and knowledge of truth.
¹⁰ *Praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? ... ¹² May the Lord make you increase and abound in love ... ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless [without compromise] in holiness before our God. (1 Thes. 3:10-13)*

⁶ *He who begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ ... ⁹ I pray that your love may abound ... ¹⁰ that you may be sincere and without offense till the day. (Phil. 1:6-10)*

- N. To live perfect and blameless is to live without compromise. This is not the same as the gift of righteousness.
- ² *Epaphras ... always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. (Col. 4:12)*
- ²⁴ *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless [blameless in our character] before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. (Jude 24)*
- O. Jesus spoke to the rich young ruler of perfect, or complete, obedience that included his money.
- ²⁰ *The young man said to Him, “All these [commands] things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” ²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” (Mt. 19:20-21)*
- P. To live in complete or perfect obedience is also referred to as God’s love being perfected in us.
- ¹² *If we love one another ... His love has been perfected in us ... ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 Jn. 4:12-18)*
- Q. What does it mean to be lovesick? First, it means to love God first and most. We want to love Jesus in a deep and steady way, not just blow kisses to Him on the run as we pursue blessing. Second, it means to be sick or pained when compromise hinders our love for Jesus (Mt. 5:3-4).
- R. Our greatest calling is to love Him a complete way with love that is perfected. Every movement of our heart in seeking to show love to Him by obedience moves Him, and thus it is not in vain. Do you know the way that you move Him? Each time we repent of compromise, it moves Him. The Lord values our journey to grow in love. *If we do not quit in our pursuit, then we win.*
- S. What is your greatest dream for your life? Is it to be empowered to walk in complete obedience? True freedom is found in the yoke of Christ; we refuse to get trapped in bitterness by those who mistreat us or get caught up into seeking wealth and fame as our primary goal in the kingdom.
- T. Jesus as the jealous God reveals Himself to us as more than our Savior (forgiver) and healer, but as the jealous Bridegroom God who will not relent in His pursuit of us until He has all our heart.
- ¹⁴ *For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Ex. 34:14)*
- U. Some believers are saved, yet as through fire. They are like one who is pulled out of the fire just in the nick of time. They escape through the flames, yet they lose all that they had with them.
- ¹⁴ *If anyone’s work which he has built ... endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:14-15)*

- V. We can suffer the loss of some of our potential of the measure of God's glory in the Millennium.
⁸ *Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, that you may be rewarded fully. (2 Jn. 8; NIV)*
- W. In October 1978, I had a supernatural encounter in which Jesus said, "*You are saved, but your life was wasted.*" I protested, "You have the wrong person." The thought came that *it is impossible to manipulate the Man Christ Jesus*. I cried, "Can I have another chance?" The next thought came strongly that *it is appointed unto a person to die once, then comes the judgment* (Heb. 9:27). I wept with a profound sense of loss and regret. What matters most about our life is what Jesus thinks when our eyes meet. I fear regret more than anything else in my life.

Appendix: Being Complete in Christ

III. BEING COMPLETE IN JESUS—TWO ISSUES (JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION)

- A. The Scripture presents two different aspects of being complete before God. First, the moment we are born again, we are instantly made complete in Christ in our legal position (justification) because of Jesus' work on the cross. Second, we progressively become *complete in our obedience* in our living condition before God (sanctification). Both are foundational truths.
¹⁷ *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away ... ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)*
- B. We are automatically and fully complete in Christ by virtue of the new birth (Col. 1:20-22; 2:10).
¹⁰ *You are complete in Him. (Col. 2:10)*
- C. Our primary objective and challenge in this life is to become complete in our obedience. We are to be complete in our dedication to God, or in agreement with the Holy Spirit's leadership.
³ *The testing of your faith produces patience [endurance]. ⁴ Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing [in our obedience]. (Jas 1:3-4)*
⁹ *This also we pray, that you may be made complete. (2 Cor. 13:9)*
¹¹ *Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace. (2 Cor. 13:11)*
¹² *Epaphras ... always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. (Col. 4:12)*
²⁸ *We preach warning every man and teaching every man ... that we may present every man perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this end I also labor. (Col. 1:28-29)*

⁶ He who begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ ... ⁹ I pray your love may abound more and more ... ¹⁰ that you may be sincere and without offense [compromise] till the day of Christ, ¹¹ being filled with the fruits of righteousness. (Phil. 1:6-11)

¹⁷ That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:17)

²⁰ May the God of peace ... through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹ make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is pleasing in His sight. (Heb. 13:20-21)

¹⁵ Let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. (Phil. 3:15)

⁴⁸ You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)

²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (Mt. 19:21)

³ Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? (Gal. 3:3)

¹³ Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:13)

²² Faith was working together with his works and by works faith was made perfect. (Jas. 2:22)

² If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the body. (Jas. 3:2)

¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Peter 5:10)

¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 Jn. 4:18)

²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. (Jn. 17:23)

¹⁰ May God ... after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish ... and settle you. (1 Pet. 5:10)

¹⁴ I bow my knees to the Father ... ¹⁶ that He would grant you ... to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts ... that you, being rooted and grounded in love ... ¹⁹ may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:14-19)

¹⁹ My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)

² *You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. (Deut. 4:2)*

⁶ *They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Lk. 1:6)*

²² *Abstain from every form of evil. ²³ May God ... sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord. (1 Thes. 5:22-23)*

D. The church of Sardis was deceived by their reputation of being deep in God.

² *Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. (Rev. 3:2-3)*

IV. PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES TO BE BLAMELESS (OVERCOME TEMPTATION)

¹¹ *We pray always for you that our God would count you worthy [by living blameless] of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness. (2 Thes. 1:11)*

²⁴ *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless [blameless in our character] before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. (Jude 24)*

²⁶ *That He [Jesus] might cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church ... that she should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:26-27)*

⁹ *I pray that your love may abound ... ¹⁰ that you may be sincere and without offense [not offended at God nor offending God by sin] till the day of Christ. (Phil. 1:9-10)*

V. OUR LIFE GOAL IS TO LIVE BLAMELESS IN OUR DEDICATION TO JESUS

⁷ *Eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:7-8)*

¹⁵ *You may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. (Phil. 2:15)*

² *A bishop then must be blameless ... sober-minded, of good behavior. (1 Tim. 3:2)*

¹⁰ *But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. (1 Tim. 3:10)*

⁵ *Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day ... ⁷ And these things command, that they may be blameless. (1 Tim. 5:5-7)*

¹¹ But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of faith ... ¹⁴ keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing. (1 Tim. 6:11-14)

⁷ For a bishop must be blameless ... not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money. (Titus 1:7)

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. (2 Peter 3:14)

²⁰ The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mt. 19:20-22)

⁶ They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Lk. 1:6)

²⁹ Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! (Deut. 5:29)

VI. WALKING WORTHY OF OUR CALLING: BEING COMPLETE IN OUR OBEDIENCE

- A. We are to pray for the saints to walk in complete obedience and thus to be found worthy of ruling in the age to come. The Church is to have a vision for full obedience, knowing that it has continuity to the age to come. This purposeful living challenges aimlessness so common today.

¹⁰ When He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints ... ¹¹ Therefore we pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling. (2 Thes. 1:10-11)

⁹ We do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will ... ¹⁰ that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him ... ¹¹ strengthened with all might ... for all patience (perseverance). (Col. 1:9-11)

- B. Jesus exhorted us to pray for ourselves—that we would walk in a measure of grace that enables us to stand against compromise, so that we would be worthy of ruling with Him (Lk. 21:36; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:10-14; Phil. 4:1; Col. 4:12; 1 Thes. 3:8; 2 Thes. 2:15; Rev. 6:17).

³⁴ Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day [Jesus' second coming] come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For it will come as a snare (trap that causes some to fall away) on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things (snare of compromises) that will come to pass, and to stand (instead of fall in compromise) before the Son of Man. (Lk. 21:34-36)

¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? (Rev. 6:17)

¹³ *God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13)*

¹⁰ *Be strong in the Lord ...* ¹¹ *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* ¹³ *... Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Eph. 6:10-13)*

¹² *Epaphras ... always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. (Col. 4:12)*

VII. THE END-TIME CHURCH WILL BE BLAMELESS, OR COMPLETE IN OBEDIENCE

- A. John prophesied the end-time Church would be prepared by the time of Jesus' second coming.

⁷ *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."* ⁸ *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:7-8)*

- B. God will greatly increase the ranks of the faithful at the end of the age. Paul is not referring to the glory of being forgiven of all spots and blemishes, but of the glory of overcoming them.

²⁶ *That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷ *that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:26-27)*