

[R4611 : page 157]

ANCIENT WORTHIES – HOW PERFECTED?

A PERFECT body implies a perfect mind, because the mind is a part of the body, and a man who has no brains or who has only half his brains would not be a perfect man. Probably there will be no difference of thought thus far in respect to this question, but the real point at issue would be: What constitutes a perfect character?

Father Adam had, in one sense of the word, a perfect character when he was created in God's image and likeness, being perfect both in mind and in body. His mind being in the image of God his character was good; no blemish was there; no preference for sin, but the reverse of this – an appreciation of righteousness and a tendency toward it. He had not a hard heart, but a fleshly heart – a tender heart. He would not be cruel, but just, loving and kind – all that would constitute a good man, because God made him thus.

But there is another sense in which we use the word character, a sense in which Adam never had character in full, viz., in the sense of character developed, tested and proven. God tried him, and because of his inexperience he failed, even though his character was good and his whole organism perfect. If he had known as much about God as we know, he would undoubtedly have stood the test; but had he been successful in this test respecting the eating of forbidden fruit, we have no thought that it would have been the end of his testing. Undoubtedly [R4612 : page 157] other tests would have come, and gradually he would have been growing in the knowledge of God, in obedience, etc.; but lacking experience he failed in the very first feature of his trial. So the Scriptures inform us regarding our Lord Jesus as a man,

that he was able to endure faithfully because of his previous knowledge of the Father.

If we suppose our Lord Jesus to have been merely a perfect man as was Adam, without any additional knowledge of God, without any appreciation of his "glory with the Father before the world was," without an insight into the Divine Plan given through the holy Spirit and the Word of God, we would suppose him equally as liable to failure as was Adam; but when we remember that he had these various other blessings, then we see the force of the Scripture which says, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, when he shall bear their iniquities" – referring to the time of his consecration unto death and his crucifixion on the cross.

Our Lord had the knowledge that enabled him to see and understand in a manner impossible to Adam. In his case we see that the testing through the Adversary during the forty days of fasting in the wilderness was not counted of the Father as sufficient proof of his character-perfection, but, rather, we find that "he was tempted in all points like as we are" – that for three and a half years this testing work continued. This inference is to be drawn not only from the New Testament records of our Lord's experiences, but also from the words of the Apostle, "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." Again, the same thought is illustrated by the high priest who, during the time which represents our Lord's earthly ministry, was in the Holy, crumbling the incense upon the fire, thus symbolically representing the testing and proving, in every particular, of our Lord's character.

If, therefore, it was appropriate that our Lord should be tested after he was begotten, as a New Creature, after he had consecrated his life even unto death, and if it is appropriate that we also should be fully tested after we become New Creatures, begotten of the

holy Spirit, then we might wonder in what manner the Ancient Worthies received any testing which would constitute a full proof of character. When we examine the records of these men – *Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Samson, Daniel and others* – we find that they manifested great faith; and they endured severe ordeals and testings of their loyalty to God, and their confidence in him. It does not surprise us, therefore, that the testimony "that they pleased God," was given respecting them. This assures us that they had considerable character development. God must have seen their hearts to be loyal, else he never would have considered them worthy of the "better resurrection." At the same time we believe that they will have need of further experience.

Faith seems to be the chief element of character that was developed under Samson's experiences. We do not know how much patience, long suffering, brotherly-kindness, gentleness, meekness, etc., were developed in his character; nothing is stated respecting the matter, but we have no reason to suppose that Samson was a very gentle man. The slaying of 3,000 men with the jaw-bone of an ass as well as other experiences, would not seem to imply this. We may reasonably suppose, therefore, that though Samson will be brought back in an absolutely perfect condition, and under the favorable conditions of the Millennial Age, there will probably be experiences in life that he never encountered and that will be so new to him that he might be in danger of making mistakes. Assuredly he will have much to learn respecting the things of the Spirit of God. The Scriptures state that all will be brought under the blessing of the holy Spirit in the future.

These Ancient Worthies will not be begotten of the Spirit, as is the Church, but the same prophecy that relates how the servants and hand-maids are to receive the holy Spirit during this Gospel Age, tells also that, "after those days God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh." And since those Ancient Worthies lived before the outpouring of the holy Spirit, their time for receiving a measure

of this blessing belongs to the future and undoubtedly the giving of the holy Spirit to them will have much to do with fixing their characters, which will already be perfect. They will be brought to greater knowledge, and having already endured testings and been proven loyal, they will have only to learn how to use their talents and powers in full conformity with the Divine will.

We understand that these men would be in a die-able condition, in the sense of being mortal and liable to death; but that they would come under the condemnation of the Second Death is highly improbable. If any man has stood trial under conditions of ignorance and superstition, and the measurable darkness of his time – has endured temptations from the world and from the Adversary, and proven faithful under those conditions – it is reasonable to suppose that he would be found perfect under the conditions of the Millennial Age, which will be so much more favorable to righteousness and full obedience to God. We therefore have no reason to suppose that any of the Ancient Worthies will come short of the eternal goal, eternal life.

The fact that the Ancient Worthies will be under the New Covenant arrangement, under the Mediatorial Kingdom, not having full access to the Father until the close of the Millennial Age, is not an evidence of disfavor nor of anything contrary to their best interests, but rather a very gracious arrangement by which any possible mistake would be covered by Christ's mediation and would not bring them under the Divine sentence of the Second Death. We are not expecting that they will make mistakes, but if, upon their awakening, they should be at once turned over to God, and God's law should operate as we understand it will, and as it did in Adam's case, so that the slightest deflection would mean death, we see **[R4612 : page 158]** their position would be much less favorable. Therefore, the Millennial Age will provide abundant opportunity to come to full knowledge; and we believe the Scriptures to indicate, though they do not

positively so state, that their fidelity being further tested by their service during the Millennial Age, as a part of the natural seed of Abraham, in blessing the remainder of his seed and all the Gentiles who will come into that seed, will constitute them worthy of an exchange of nature and a share with the Great Company on the spirit plane.

