

Sermon #50 — *Discovering Christ in Leviticus*

Title: **PERFECT, YET VILE**

Text: Leviticus 22:21

Subject: *The Believer's Two Natures*

Date: Sunday Morning — May 26, 2019

Reading: *Psalm 121:1-8 and Psalm 73:1-28*

Introduction:

I want us to return to Leviticus 22:21 this morning. Last Lord's Day, I tried to set before you the blessed, glorious fact that all who are in Christ are "*perfect in Christ,*" expounding to the best of my ability the words of our Lord in this text. — "*It shall be perfect to be accepted.*"

Illustration: My First Invitation to Preach at Ashland — A Wednesday Night in 1976 — **Am and Ruth Adkins** — Ruth asked, "Bro. Fortner, How good does a person have to be to get to heaven?" She beamed with delight, when I answered, "As good as God."

The Holy Lord God cannot and will not accept anything less than what he is — absolute perfection. He says, "*It shall be perfect to be*

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

accepted.” In order to get to heaven we must be as good as God, perfect in all things. — Perfect in heart! — Perfect in thought! — Perfect in works! — Perfectly holy!

- We are nothing but sin!
- We cannot not sin!
- But the Lord God says, “*It shall be perfect to be accepted.*”

Is there, therefore, no hope for sinners? Must we all perish forever? No! Blessed be the Lord our God! In Christ he has found a way to be both just and Justifier. — He has found a way to make fallen, sinful people like us perfect, perfectly holy and perfectly accepted.

This perfection is not of us, in us, nor through us, nor the result of anything we do or have done. It is entirely the work of God’s free grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus was made sin for us, our sins were imputed to Christ. And the penalty against sin was paid in full by the sin-atoning death

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

of our Lord Jesus Christ as the sinner's Substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21). Having made Christ sin for us and having punished his Son for our sins to the full satisfaction of his holy law and justice, the God of all grace makes chosen, redeemed sinners the righteousness of God in Christ and imputes Christ's perfect righteousness to every sinner who trusts his dear Son (Romans 3:24-26; 4:6-8).

(Romans 3:24-26) "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

(Romans 4:6-8) "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7)

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

Today, I want us to look at this statement in Leviticus 22:21 again, and try get all the sweet milk it contains.

(Leviticus 22:21) “And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish *his* vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, **it shall be perfect to be accepted**; there shall be no blemish therein.”

God requires that the priest who offers a sacrifice be perfect (v. 3). — **Christ is that Priest.**

(Leviticus 22:3) “Whosoever *he be* of all your seed among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence:
I *am* the LORD.”

God requires that the sacrifice be perfect, too (vv. 20-21). — **Christ is that Sacrifice.**

(Leviticus 22:20-21) “*But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. (21) And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish *his* vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein.”*

We have in Christ both a perfect Priest and a perfect Sacrifice. So perfect and infinitely meritorious is our great High Priest and Sacrifice that he makes even our imperfect gifts and sacrifices perfect and acceptable to our God (v. 23; 1 Peter 2:5).

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

(Leviticus 22:23) “Either a bullock or a lamb that hath anything superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer *for* a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted.”

In verse 25 the Lord demanded that **no sacrifice be offered upon his altar that was taken from a stranger’s hand**. That is to say, God will not accept the sacrifices of any unbeliever. He will not accept the sacrifices, services, or even the prayers of anyone apart from Christ, “*because their corruption* (The sinner’s, not the animal’s!) *is in them.*” In God’s eyes even the plowing of the wicked is sin (Proverbs 21:4).

Christ is everywhere in this chapter. I cannot begin to expound these verses fully; and that is not my purpose this morning. But I don’t want you to miss the sweetness I have found.

Verse 24 speaks of the sacrifice being one that was not bruised, crushed, broken, or cut (castrated),

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

because Christ our Surety was a man, fully man, in all things, sin alone excepted. There was no weakness or unmanliness in him.

Now, look at verse 28. Here is something gloriously precious.

(Leviticus 22:28) “And *whether it be* cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day.”

Many suggest that this was meant to discourage cruelty. I do not doubt that it had that effect. But the typical reason for this law is far more precious than that!

God the Father was to give up his darling Son, his only begotten Son; and the Son was to be torn from the Father’s care by the hands of wicked men. How could this be represented if both the ewe and her young were offered together?

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

It is written, and must never be forgotten, “*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.*” The bleating of the tender lamb in its parent’s ears, as it was taken from the fold, filling the air with the sad, mournful sound, represented the bleating of “*the Lamb of God led to the slaughter,*” who so sadly, mournfully wailed, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani! My God! My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*”

Remember, these laws applied to domestic, household things, arrangements about what they were to carry out of their houses and herds for the altar. Thus a picture was hung up in every house in Israel of this grand, gospel truth — “*God spared not his Son, but delivered him up to us all.*”

Okay. Let’s go back to verse 21. The title of my message is **PERFECT, YET VILE**. You will see why, I am sure.

(Leviticus 22:21) “And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

accomplish *his* vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, **it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein.**”

Proposition: In, by, and with Christ, every saved sinner, though utterly vile by nature, is made perfect by the grace of God; and, being perfect in Christ, we are accepted of God in him.

PERFECT PRIEST AND SACRIFICE

1ST — **We have a both perfect Priest and a perfect Sacrifice, in the Person of our blessed, all-glorious Lord Jesus Christ.** He, having “*offered himself without spot to God,*” passed into the heavens, as our great High Priest, “*having obtained eternal redemption for us.*” There he ever lives to make intercession for us. The Book of Hebrews deals with these two points in great detail. It throws into vivid contrast the sacrifice and priesthood of the Mosaic system and the Sacrifice and Priesthood of Christ, showing how Christ fulfilled both types.

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

In Christ we have both divine perfection and human perfection, both as our Sacrifice and as our Priest. We have all that God could require, and all that man could need.

- His precious blood has put away all our sins.
- His all-prevailing intercession ever maintains us in all the perfection of that place into which his blood has brought us.

A PARADOX

2nd — **Every believer, every heaven-born soul is a great paradox.** — *“The world knoweth us not because it knew him not.”* Paul said, with regard to God’s people, *“He that is spiritual judgeth (discerns) all things, yet he himself is judged (discerned) of no man”* (1 Corinthians 2:15).

- We are the happiest mourning people in the world.
- We are the fullest emptiest people on earth.

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

- We are the most exalted abased people in existence.
- And we are both perfectly holy and utterly sinful.

We are perfect in Christ, “*complete in him*” (Colossians 2:10). Yet, in ourselves we are so utterly feeble and so faltering, so full of failure and infirmity, so sinful and prone to every evil, that we could not stand for a moment, were it not for the fact that “*he ever liveth to make intercession for us.*”

OUR WARFARE

These two things are constantly set before us and must be constantly remembered by us (Romans 7:14-23; Galatians 5:19-23). The believer is a person constantly at war with himself, a person who must, as long as he is in this body of flesh, endure an internal warfare between the flesh and the Spirit that cannot be understood except as it is experienced and cannot

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

be understood until these two things are clearly established.

1. **In Christ, by his blood and righteousness, we are before God altogether without sin and perfect, complete, and fully worthy of God's acceptance, "holy, unblameable and unproveable" in his sight, without one spot of sin or wrinkle of infirmity.**

(Numbers 23:21) "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God *is* with him, and the shout of a king *is* among them."

(Colossians 1:12) "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

(Colossians 2:9-10) "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (10) And ye are

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

(1 Peter 4:1-2) “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; (2) That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

(1 John 3:1-10) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (4) Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

transgression of the law. (5) And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (6) Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. (7) Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (8) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (9) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (10) In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

(1 John 4:16-17) “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (17) Herein is our love

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.”

2. **But in ourselves we are just the opposite of perfect.** — **We are utterly vile.**

With Job we cry, “*Behold, I am vile...I abhor myself!*” With David we look upon the evil that is within us and declare, “*I was as a beast before thee!*” Though I am perfect in Christ, forgiven and accepted in the Beloved, I am constantly a sinner in need of forgiveness in myself. This is the warfare that Paul describes in Romans 7.

(Romans 7:14-25) “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. (16) If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. (17) Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

dwelleth in me. (18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. (19) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (20) Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (21) I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

(Romans 8:1-10) “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

(2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (5) For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. (6) For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. (7) Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) **But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.** Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (10) **And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.**”

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

- The old man is death and dead because of sin, because it is sin.
- The new man is life because it is righteousness and cannot sin. — “*Christ in you!*” — “*The new man created in righteousness and true holiness!*” — “*The divine nature!*”

(2 Corinthians 5:17) “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

If we have anything like correct apprehensions of the grand foundation truths of Christianity, and any measure of experience in the life of faith, we see clearly that, though “*complete in him who is the head of all principality and power,*” we are yet in constant need of the powerful advocacy of our adorable, all-glorious Christ as our great High Priest in heaven. We no longer live in the flesh but in the Spirit (Romans 8:9).

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

Yet, so long as we exist in this body of flesh, for as long as we are down here amid the infirmities, conflicts, and buffetings of earth, we must have Christ to intercede as our unfailing, effectual Advocate at the Father's right hand in heaven.

(1 John 2:1-2) “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.*”

The believer is “*washed, sanctified, and justified*” in Christ (1 Corinthians 6). He is “*accepted in the beloved*” (Ephesians 1. 6). He can never come into judgment or condemnation (Romans 8:1). Death and judgment are behind us, because we are united to Christ who has passed through judgment and death on our behalf and in our stead, as our Substitute.

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

All these things are divinely true of the very weakest, most unlettered, and inexperienced member of the family of God. If, at this very moment you come to Christ, if at this moment you begin to trust him, all these are true of you, as true of you as they are of the most aged and well-established saint on earth. **Christ has made you perfect before God, for he “hath perfected forever them that are sanctified!”**

Yet, because as we carry about with us a nature so incorrigibly bad, and so irremediably ruined, that no discipline can correct it, and no medicine cure it — because we live here in a body of sin and death — because we are surrounded on all sides by hostile influences — because we are perpetually at war with the world, the flesh, and the devil — we could never keep our ground, much less make progress, were we not upheld by the all-prevailing intercession of Christ, our great High Priest, who bears the names of his people upon his breast and upon his shoulder.

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

I realize that many, because of poor instruction in the things of God and because of the constant influence of religion, have great difficulty in reconciling the fact that every believer both is perfect in his standing before God in Christ and in constant need of Christ as his Advocate and Great High Priest. We mournfully sing with Newton...

“I would disclose my whole complaint,
But where shall I begin?
No words of mine can fully paint
That worst distemper, sin.

It lies not in a single part,
But through my frame is spread:
A burning fever in my heart,
A palsy in my head!”

And, without pausing, we sing with triumphant glee...

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

My beauty are, my glorious dress:
Midst flaming worlds, with these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head!

When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
Even then shall this be all my plea —
‘Jesus hath lived and died for me!’

Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay,
While through Thy blood absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame?

This spotless robe the same appears
When ruined nature sinks in years:
No age can change its glorious hue —
The robe of Christ is ever new!”

“Christ, exalted, is our song,
Hymned by all the blood-bought throng;

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

To His throne our shouts shall rise;
God with us by sacred ties.

Shout, believer, to thy God,
He hath once the winepress trod:
Peace procured by blood divine,
Cancelled all thy sins and mine!

In thy Surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One!

Here thy bleeding wounds are healed,
Sin condemned, and pardon sealed;
Grace her empire still maintains;
Christ without a rival reigns.

Through corruption, felt within,
Darkness, deadness, guilt, and sin,
Still to Jesus turn thine eyes,
Israel's hope and sacrifice

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

Oh the heights and depths of grace,
Shining with meridian blaze!
Here the sacred records show
Sinners black, but comely too.

Saints dejected, cease to mourn,
Faith shall soon a vision turn;
Ye the kingdom shall obtain,
And with Christ exalted reign.”

— *John Kent*

REVELATION AND EXPERIENCE

3rd — **These are things known only by divine revelation and personal experience. These two things are as distinctly taught in the Word of God as they are constantly experienced by us.**

1. In Christ we are absolutely perfect before God.

2. In ourselves we are utterly corrupt.

Those two things may appear to incompatible one with another in the minds of men, but man's

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

ignorance has nothing to do with God’s revelation. Every believer is perfect in Christ; but, in himself, he is a poor, feeble, sinful creature, ever liable to fall.

Christ is an all-sufficient Savior and High Priest.

— **This is our inexpressible blessedness!**

- We have an Advocate and King in heaven who is able to manage all our affairs for us, at the right hand of the Majesty on high.
- We have One who upholds us continually by the right hand of his righteousness.
- We have One who will never let us go.
- We have One who is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.
- We have One who is “*the same yesterday, today, and forever.*”
- We have One who will carry us triumphantly through all the difficulties and dangers which surround us; and, finally, “*present (us) faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*”

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

Blessed forever be the grace that has made such ample provision for all our need in the blood of a Perfect Sacrifice and the intercession of a perfect High Priest!

OUR RESPONSE

4th — **How do you respond to this great good news? How do I respond to such matchless grace?**

I can tell you how we ought to respond to it. Whatsoever we do, in word or in deed, we ought to do all to the glory of God. Let us strive to “*keep (ourselves) unspotted from the world*” and honor our God in all things. Let us “*walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work*” (Colossians 1:10), doing “*those things that are pleasing in his sight*” (1 John 3:22).

We have “*boldness to enter into the holiest, through the blood of Jesus.*” — “We have a great High Priest over the house of God” (Hebrews 10). We are “*accepted in the Beloved.*” Nothing can ever rob us

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

of these privileges. — “*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Let us take care that we “*grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*” by whom we are sealed (Ephesians 4:30).

Those ceremonial matters against which the sons of Aaron were warned, in Leviticus, have their antitypes in a very practical way in our lives.

- Were they warned to avoid things unclean? So are we.
- Were they warned to avoid alliances with the ungodly? So are we.
- Were they warned to keep themselves from all ceremonial uncleanness? So are we.
- Were they warned not to profane God’s holy name? So are we.

PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

5th — Perhaps you are thinking, “Bro. Don, Why press this matter so hard? **Why is it so important for us to constantly be reminded that we are perfect in Christ and yet vile in ourselves?**” Let me try to show you the practical importance of this message.

1. In the light of these facts, our perfection in Christ and our utter vileness in ourselves, **we are compelled to look out of ourselves to Christ alone.**

- Our salvation is in Christ.
- Our acceptance is in Christ.
- Our assurance is in Christ.

2. Knowing our own corruption, being forced to face what we are in ourselves by nature, **we ought to be kind, patient, and long suffering with one another.**

3. Being ourselves in constant need of forgiveness, **we ought to be gracious and forgiving toward each other.**

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

4. Being the constant recipients of grace, the constant recipients of mercy, the constant recipients of God's free salvation in Christ, **we have good news for poor sinners like ourselves.** — *“With the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. O LORD, there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared”* (Psalm 130).

5. When we are made to see clearly and know experimentally what God has done for us by his matchless, free grace in Christ, **we are constrained by love and grace** *“to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God”* (Romans 12: 1), offering *“the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name”* (Hebrews 13:15). As members of the *“spiritual house”* and the *“holy priesthood,”* we are compelled by mercy to *“offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2: 5).

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

6. **To some small degree, we are able, in the light of these things, to anticipate that blissful time when, from a redeemed “holy nation and royal priesthood,” the hallelujahs of intelligent and fervent praise shall ascend to the throne of God and the Lamb throughout the everlasting ages.**

I can almost hear the choir singing in heaven. Some of our friends have been in their midst a while now (James Lee Rankin, Bro. Hubert Montgomery and his wife Louise, Nancy Allen and Harrell, Judy Estes and Bobbie). Others are just now taking their seats (Bro. James Jordan), and just listen to David Coleman sing now!

(Revelation 5:9-14) “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; (10) And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the

PERFECT, YET VILE

Leviticus 22:21

earth. (11) And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; (12) Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. (13) And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. (14) And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

Amen.