

Excellence #1

Committing Ourselves to Excellence – Introduction

Matt 5:43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Introduction:

In our last verse 48 it challenges us with a personal responsibility. To be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect. We can read as for us to be flawless, or to have our exterior without flaw. But the reality of the meaning is that we are to strive to be COMPLETE. The original meaning of Perfect is Being Complete.

In our Journey with Christ there is no room for mediocrity, or just the norm. God who is complete challenges us every day by His Spirit to reflect His image in us, to be truly be like his Sons and Daughters.

This is the purpose of Church

Eph 4:11-14

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

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;

Col 1:28

Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Note: Preaching Jesus will bring us to completion.

It is our responsibility to strive to completion and present ourselves to the Lord in such...

2 Tim 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Mindset of Excellence –

When you hear the term Excellence, what goes through your mind? Waynes World? Bond?

The Def: To exceed, to grow or to magnify

Isa 28:29

This also comes from the LORD of hosts, Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance.

A. God has never done or made anything that was not characterized by superlative goodness and excellent quality: "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

B. Unfortunately, however, the words excellence and quality sometimes cannot be used to describe the products of our efforts -- occasionally we slip into the habit of doing things in a careless, inferior way.

C. But in the Lord's work, of all things, it should **constantly be our aim to do the very best** we are capable of.

D. Should we not be motivated by a commitment to excellence in the work of the Lord?

If we are going to have any motivation for the things of God, then we must change our attitude.

I. TWO BASIC ATTITUDES ARE POSSIBLE: ONE OF THESE TENDS TOWARD MEDIOCRITY

A. There is a certain disposition that is concerned with nothing more than "getting by."

1. This attitude is content with a relatively low level of quality.

2. Nothing is aspired to beyond what is "adequate" or "good enough."

B. With this attitude, we offer work and service to the Lord that are inferior even by human standards.

Cf. **Mal. 1:8.**

1. What object lesson was God teaching by requiring Israel to offer the first and best of what they had physically -- if not that we ought in all things to "give of our best to the Master"?

2. Solomon advised: "Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase" (Prov. 3:9).

C. "The general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity the ascendant power among mankind" (John Stuart Mill).

D. "Mediocre" = of moderate to low quality; average or inferior.

E. In our work, when we take the course of least resistance and do only what is easy, mediocrity increases -- without a conscious effort to rise above it, we are left with a "lowest common denominator" quality of thinking and living.

F. In regard to less-than-excellent work in the church, people have been overheard to say, "Oh well, it's only the church."

1. What kind of attitude is reflected in such a statement?

2. What would be the result of such an attitude in the Lord's work?

II. THE OTHER BASIC ATTITUDE TENDS TOWARD EXCELLENCE

A. Rather than contentment with mediocrity, we should have a commitment to excellence in whatever we do.

1 Col 3:23-24

23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

2. Eccl. 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

B. Should we not have higher standards of excellence in the Lord's work than we do in our own endeavors?

1. 1 Cor 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, **always abounding** in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

2. 2 Cor. 9:6.

C. Our English word "pride" can mean a sinful attitude toward oneself -- but we also use it to mean self-respect, a sense of one's own proper dignity or value, pleasure or satisfaction taken in one's work, etc.

1. Is there not a good sense in which it can be said we ought to "take pride" in what we do in the Lord's work?

2. Gal. 6:4. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.

D. Zenith, the electronics manufacturer, used to say in its advertising: "The quality goes in before the name goes on."

In history the word excellence has been used as a title of honor. It derives from the word excel which means to go beyond average.

Efficiency-Getting the job done right.

Effectiveness-Getting the right job done.
Excellence-Getting the right job done right.

1. Value Excellence

Success is the maximum utilization of the ability that you have."
(Zig Ziglar)

"Success bases our worth on a comparison with others.
Excellence gauges our value by measuring us against our own potential.

Success grants its rewards to the few but is the dream of the multitudes.
Excellence is available to all living beings but is accepted by the ... few.

Success focuses its attention on the external - becoming the taste maker for the insatiable appetites of the ... consumer.
Excellence beams its spotlight on the internal spirit...

Success encourages expedience and compromise, which prompts us to treat people as a means to our ends.
Excellence cultivates principles and consistency..."
(John Johnson, Christian Excellence, 1985)

C. Our greatest challenge is not gaining on others, but growing ourselves.
"Our business in life is not to get ahead of others, but to get ahead of ourselves - to break our own records, to outstrip our yesterday by our today." {Steward B. Johnson}

1. What should be the quality of the work that we attach the Lord's name to?
2. We have a duty to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Tit. 2:10).
- E. Quality knowledge > quality principles/convictions > quality actions.
- F. A commitment to excellence (or the lack of it) often shows up most clearly in the way we do the "little" things.
- G. Should we not have a high commitment to excellence in:
 1. Our individual work as Christians?
 2. Our congregational work?
- H. A commitment to excellence requires extra effort -- carefulness and hard work are required.

Conclusion

- A. We should strive to "give of our best to the Master."
 1. We should aim to go "beyond ordinary."
 2. We should be striving for the "quality life."
- B. It makes a big difference how high our goals are in the work we do.
 1. If we "aim for the stars," we may not reach them every time, but our work will be more excellent than if our sights were lower.
 2. It is not a shame to fail; it is a shame to aim low.
- C. Wherever the Lord's work is concerned, good enough is not good enough!
- D. Our intent should always be to work as those who do "not need to be ashamed" (2 Tim. 2:15).
- E. Indeed, "nothing but the best" is good enough for the Lord who gave His life for us.
- F. "For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again"