

IS AIMING FOR PERFECTION A GOOD THING?

By Nino Boezio

When I was in high school, sometimes I would hear the expression, “Don’t be a saint!”

There was a rationale behind this statement. Saints are often portrayed as good people who have little tolerance for imperfections. They may expect people around them to follow the same standard, always be serious and not have any fun. Such an atmosphere can produce a rigid and boring environment, and stifles creativity.

Aiming for perfection can bring about unpleasant results in both the person looking for it and those subjected to it. Standards can be set much higher than what a typical human being can live up to. It can lead to frustration, as the person seeking perfection also can’t satisfactorily meet his or her own set standards. Aiming for perfection can cause this person to judge others as inferior because they aren’t living up to the same criteria. So is aiming for perfection an unpleasant and unreasonable goal?

The Bible adds perspective to this matter. Wise king Solomon wrote: *Ecclesiastes 7:16 (NKJV) Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourself?* Building oneself in righteousness and wisdom are essential elements of the perfection development process. But Solomon also warns that taking these activities to excess will be damaging, because we are pressing the matter beyond our limitations. However, interestingly, after a long discourse on proper human behavior, Jesus concluded His remarks by saying: *Matthew 5:48 (NKJV) Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect.*

We do need to understand perfection from God’s standpoint. Humanly, we may view perfection as never falling short and unfortunately ignore the fact that there is still a learning process involved. Throughout the Bible, God is not hung up on the occasional mistakes we make, provided we are not be deliberately doing something wrong or unwise. God is focused on our process towards perfection: *1 John 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.* Despite God being perfect, He does not look down upon human beings who are not yet approaching the mark.

We should seek to continually improve ourselves and set an example to others, and this takes time. We need to acknowledge everyone’s limitations including our own. We must be careful to avoid bad influences that can bring us down, while at the same time seeking to help those who are also interested in improving themselves and aiming for a higher standard.