

## *Be Perfect*<sup>1</sup>

**Proposition:** You can be perfect, just like Jesus commanded.

**Text:** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’<sup>44</sup> 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,<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?<sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, (*telios*) just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (**Matthew 5:43-48**).

### **Introduction:**

1. Jesus said, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (*telios*) Matthew 5:48.
2. A typical reaction: ‘Now isn’t that silly? No one is perfect!’
3. But would Jesus command his disciples to do what is impossible?
4. Our intent here is to discover what the Bible means when it uses the word ‘perfect’

### **I. Perfection in the sense of faultlessness is unattainable.**

- A. *Paul said*, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected (*telioo*); but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” **Philippians 3:12**.
- B. *John said*, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” **1 John 1:8**.
- C. *James said*, “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect (*telios*) man, able also to bridle the whole body” **James 3:2**.

### **II. Yet Perfection is Commanded.**

- A. *Of Abram by God*, “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless” **Genesis 17:1**.
- B. *Of Israel by Moses*, “You shall be blameless before the LORD your God” **Deuteronomy 18:13**.
- C. *Of Israel by Solomon*, “Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day” **1 Kings 8:61**.
- D. *Of Solomon by David*, “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever” **1 Chronicles 28:9**.
- E. *Of Disciples by Jesus*, “Therefore you shall be perfect (*telios*), just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (*telios*) **Matthew 5:48**.

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- F. *Of Corinthians by Paul*, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete (“be perfect” KJV - 2675). Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you” **2 Corinthians 13:11**.
- G. *Of Hebrew Christians*, “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection (*telioetes*), not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God” **Hebrews 6:1**.

### III. Furthermore, Inspired persons have prayed for perfection

- A. *David for Solomon*, “And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provision” **1 Chronicles 29:19**.
- B. *Epaphras for Colossians*, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect (*telios*) and complete in all the will of God” **Colossians 4:12**.
- C. *Paul (?) for Hebrews*, “Now may the God of peace . . . make you complete (2675) in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever” **Hebrews 13:20-21**.
- D. *Peter for Christians*, “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect (2675), establish, strengthen, and settle you” **1 Peter 5:10**.

### IV. In Addition, Certain persons in the Bible are described as Perfect

- A. *Noah*, “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations” **Genesis 6:9**.
- B. *Jacob*, “He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel” **Numbers 23:21**.
- C. *David*, “For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David” **1 Kings 11:4**.
- D. *Hezekiah*, “Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight” **Isaiah 38:3**.
- E. *Asa*, “Nevertheless Asa’s heart was loyal to the LORD all his days” **1 Kings 15:14**.
- F. *Job*, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” **Job 1:1**.
- G. *Zacharias & Elizabeth*, “There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup>And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (273)” **Luke 1:5-6**.
- H. *Nathanael*, “Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” **John 1:47**.
- I. *Elders*, “A bishop then must be blameless (423)” **1 Timothy 3:2**.

### V. Therefore, Perfection does not mean sinlessness or faultless. What, then, does it mean?

- A. That O. T. persons were “perfect in their generations *does not mean* that in accordance with their standards they had achieved the best possible life and that we have a higher, better standard today after which we are to strive.

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- B. “Two O. T. roots signify ethical or religious perfection. . . . Both imply completeness, wholeness, . . . Perfection in the O. T. is maintaining right relationship to God, the standard and judge of perfection, whose ways are perfect.” *Baker’s Theological Dictionary*.
- C. Thus, in commenting on Matthew 5:48, Albert Barnes writes, “This word commonly means finished, complete, pure, holy. Originally it is applied to a piece of mechanism, as a machine that is complete in all its parts. Applied to men, it refers to completeness of parts, or perfection, where no part is defective or wanting. Thus Job (1:1) is said to be ‘perfect;’ that is, not holy as God, or *sinless* – for fault is afterward found with him; (Job 19:20; 42:6); but his piety was proportionate – had a completeness of parts – was consistent and regular. He exhibited his religion as a prince, a father, an individual, a benefactor of the poor. He was not merely a pious man in one place, but uniformly. He was consistent everywhere. . . . This is the meaning in Matthew. Be not religious merely in loving your friends and neighbors, but let your piety be shown in loving your enemies; imitate God; let your piety be complete, proportionate, regular. This every Christian may be; this every Christian must be.” – Albert Barnes.

### VI. Examples of Perfection in the sense of completeness or wholeness

- A. 2 Timothy 3:17, “that the man of God may be complete (739), thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (i.e., he is perfect in the sense that he is completely (1822) equipped with necessary spiritual equipment.)
- B. James 1:4, “But let patience have its perfect (*telios*) work, that you may be perfect (*telios*) and complete, lacking nothing.” (A believer, in patience, lacks nothing that contributes to his completeness.)
- C. 2 Corinthians 13:9, 11, “For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. (2676) . . . <sup>11</sup>Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. (2675) . . .” (Putting into a proper condition by equipment or training. Sometimes improvement is involved as in the above references, where the passive mood means ‘mend your ways.’)
- D. Hebrews 2:10, “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect (*telioo*) through sufferings.” (Perfect in the sense that the desired purpose is achieved. Thus Jesus, already sinless, is made perfect!)

### VII. Characteristics of Perfection:

- A. Compassion on the poor, “Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect (*telios*), go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” **Matthew 19:21**.
- B. Patience: “But let patience have its perfect (*telios*) work, that you may be perfect (*telios*) and complete, lacking nothing” **James 1:4**.
- C. Love toward enemies, ““You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup>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, <sup>45</sup>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. <sup>46</sup>For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?”

<sup>48</sup>Therefore you shall be perfect (*telios*), just as your Father in heaven is perfect (*telios*)  
**Matthew 5:43-48.**

**VIII. Comparative usage of the word “Perfect” applied to those who are in Christ.**

- A. *1 Corinthians 2:6*, “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature (*teleios*), yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.”
- B. *Philippians 3:14-15*, “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Therefore let us, as many as are mature (*teleios*), have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.”
- C. In an evangelical sense,
  1. *Colossians 2:10*, “and you are complete (4137) in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”
  2. *Ephesians 5:27*, “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 (299).”
  3. *2 Corinthians 5:21*, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

**Conclusion:**

1. Christians are not therefore perfect in the sense of faultless, but are rather perfect in the sense of wholeness, completeness, . . . loving both friends and enemies.
2. One can be made perfect only in Jesus Christ. If you would be perfect, you must be in him. Come, therefore to Jesus, the “author and finisher” of faith!

*Linguistic Notes on Vocabulary:*

**Hebrew**

**8549 tamiym**, *taw-meem*, from 8552; *entire* (lit. fig. or mor.); also (as noun) *integrity, truth*: - without blemish, complete, full, perfect, sincerely (-ity), sound, without spot, undefiled, upright (-ly), whole.

**8552 tamam**, *taw-mam*, a prim. Root; to *complete*, in a good or a bad sense. Lit. or fig. trans. or intrans. (as follows): - accomplish, cease, be clean [pass-] ed., consume, have done, (come to an, have an, make an) end, fail, come to the full, be all gone, X be all here, be (make) perfect, be spent, sum, be (shew self) upright, be wasted, whole.

**Greek**

**2675 katartizo**, *kat-ar-tid'zo*, from 2596 and a der. of 739; to *complete thoroughly*, i.e., *repair* (lit. or fig.) or *adjust*: - fit, frame, mend, (make) perfect (-ly join together), prepare, restore.

**5046 teleios**, *telios*; from 5056; *complete* (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.); neut. (as noun, with 3588, the article) *completeness* (men. Or mor.): perfection (-ness).

**5048 teleioo**, *telioo*; from 5046; to *complete*, i.e. (lit.) *accomplish*, or (fig.) *consummate* (in character): - consecrate, finish, fulfil, (make) perfect.

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**5056 telos**, *telos*; from a prim. (to *set out* for a definite point or *goal*); prop. The point aimed at as a *limit*, i.e. (by impl.) the *conclusion* or an act or state (*termination* [lit., fig. or indef.], *result* [immed., ultimate or prophetic], *purpose*); spec. an *impost* or *levy* (as *paid*): -+ continual, custom, end (-ing), finally, uttermost. Comp. 5411.