

Jesus Told You to Be Perfect—Here's What That Means

The word *teleios* in Greek is found 19 times in the New Covenant and is usually translated as “perfect.” It has the same prefix as telescope or telephone, meaning “far off, at a distance.” It means “end goal, result, consummation, completing a cycle.”

“Therefore be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).

This is from the Sermon on the Mount, where Yeshua teaches about the heart meaning of the law and about kingdom character qualities. Then He says, “To sum it all up, just be perfect like God.” It reminds us of the commandment to “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2).

This is a little hard for us to grasp because we all know we are not perfect. Yet God calls us to a certain type of spiritual “perfection” in His eyes.

“If you would be perfect, go and sell what you have, and give to the poor ... come, follow Me” (Matt. 19:21).

This is Yeshua's concluding instruction to the rich young ruler. Here we get an insight that perfection comes from walking on a pathway. It is following Yeshua on a journey. At the end of the journey, we become like Him. He is perfect. As we are conformed to His image, we become perfected.

“We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1 Cor. 2:6, KJV).

"... in understanding be perfect" (1 Cor. 14:20, JUB).

"Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded" (see Phil. 3:15).

"... to those who are mature [perfect], for those who through practice have powers of discernment that are trained to distinguish good from evil" (Heb. 5:14, MEV).

This is referring to relatively normal believers in this lifetime—those who are mature in faith and who have an understanding of the word of God. It refers to those who have exercised godliness and discipline in their lives.

"until we all come to unity of faith ... unto a perfect man" (Eph. 4:13, KJ21).

The work of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is to equip the saints and build up the body. The final goal is to bring us to unity, wholeness, fullness and Christlikeness. Perfection is becoming more like the perfect one.

"... so that we may present every person perfect in Jesus Christ" (Col. 1:28, KJ21).

"... so that you may stand perfect and complete" (Col. 4:12, NKJ).

"But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4, NKJV).

The goal of discipleship is to become spiritual perfect and complete. That completeness comes from being in Yeshua. We are complete when we are completely in Him. Nothing is lacking in us of the character of God and the fruit of the Spirit.

"But if any man does not err in word, he is a perfect man"

(James 3:2, MEV).

The heart and the mouth are connected by faith. If we are not saying wrong words, then our heart is in the right place.

“perfect love casts out fear ... Whoever fears is not perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).

Perfection of spirit and soul is to be filled with love and purity, not damaged or distorted by hate or fear. Perfection means being totally motivated by love. Perfection has more to do with our attitude than our achievements.

Perfection is like getting to the end of a road, finishing your race, achieving your goal, getting to your purpose, reaching your destination or fulfilling your destiny. It is simply being the way God originally intended for us to be: created in His “image” and after His “likeness” (Gen. 1:26).

When you set that as your goal, then you already are perfect in heart intention. You just have to keep going. This is what God wants. It is possible. You are already on the way. {eoa}

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