

Be Perfect Like God?

by Wayne Goff

"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48

Perfection Commanded

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His disciples to *"be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."* Do we toss aside that requirement because we know that nobody is perfect or sinless? Romans 3:10, 23. Perhaps we should ask instead, what **does** Jesus expect of us?

First, let us look at the word used here *"perfect"* (Greek, **teleioi**). It can be defined as "having reached the end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, perfect." It is applied in the New Testament generally as *coming to spiritual maturity and moral completion*. Therefore, Jesus is telling His followers that they should *develop, grow and become like the Father in heaven*. All Christians must realize that spiritual growth is a *necessary* ingredient throughout our entire lives because we will **never** reach perfection and because the world around us is so **imperfect**!

Second, look at the **context** of Matthew 5. Jesus is teaching us what it means to *"love your neighbor"* (v. 43). Jewish rabbis had apparently taught that you could *love some* and **hate others**! In contrast to that, Jesus taught the true meaning of the Scripture and said that we should even *"love"* our **enemies**, *"bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"* (v. 44). Do you see the **attitude** required? *"Love," "bless," "do good," and "pray."* Well, *who in the world could have that disposition toward their enemies?* Apparently Jesus' disciples can and do! But it does not seem *natural* for us, and we have *learned* to hate our enemies from those around us. Jesus says that as His disciples we must change our thinking.

The **motivation** given to make this change is that we 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"* v. 45). Well, now that I think about it — **yes, He does!** That should get us to thinking.

Jesus explains the **attitude** of the sinful world next. The sinful world loves *only* those who love them, and greets *only* their approved acquaintances (vv. 46-47). How can a disciple of Christ be *different* if he *acts just like everyone else?* (Disciples are to be *learners* from their Master Teacher.) *"A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher"* Luke 6:40. So more is expected of us because we are Christians. By the way, *"perfectly trained"* is from another Greek word which means *"to mend, to repair."* Disciples are *imperfect* people who are on the mend!

Third, as we go back to our original verse, we now see what Jesus had in mind when He said that we are to be perfect like our heavenly Father. *"Therefore"* — **because** our heavenly Father treats all men equally in His divine providence out of a love for all mankind, so we are to do the same thing. Like the Father, we are not approving of sinful lives, but we are wishing what is in their best interest, sometimes even at personal cost. We wish no person made *"in God's image"* (Gen. 1:26) to go to hell! So we *"love"* them, *"bless"* them, *"do good"* to them, and *"pray"* for them. As Jesus' teaching *transforms* our mind, it *changes* our actions (Romans 12:1-2). This is an amazing and wonderful thing. It is much preferred over the world's *"go to hell"* attitude.

Changes Required

All of us have some "demons" in our minds and lives that must be "exorcised." God's Word can do that for us, if we will let it. It is the **dynamite** (*"power,"* Rom. 1:16) that can **explode** our minds and lives for the better. I hope that this brief article will help you strive to become more like God as you *"love your neighbor as yourself."* This is what Jesus had in mind in the first place. So *"press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14, KJV).

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