

Be You Perfect!

This Seems Impossible ... So What Does It Mean?

Almighty God admonishes His people throughout the Scriptures **be perfect** — we will get into several of those citations in a bit — while at the same time the disciples of Him admitted that it was impossible to be perfect. Notice in particular what Paul said.

“For that which I do I allow not, for what I would [want to do] that do I not, but what I hate that I do For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing, for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:15, 18-19, 22-23).

Clearly, Paul revealed the impossibly sinful nature of the fleshly body and its pulls, which without being tempered by the power of God’s implanted Holy Spirit would let sin run amok within the lives of the Sons of God He has called out of this world. In Galatians 5 Paul revealed what the evil consequence of that sinful nature are — adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and revelings — and contrasted these unlawful attributes to the fruits of God’s Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:19-23).

How, then, can God demand that His ecclesia be perfect, when He says in Scripture that it is impossible to be perfect? We just read of Paul stating that the works of the flesh cannot please God, but rather are

sinful. This does not mean that every action of our fleshly bodies is sinful, but rather they are sinful when motivated by the selfish desires of lust, jealousy, vanity, greed, and avarice. It is the power behind the flesh — one’s state of mind, to serve God or to serve Satan — that is truly critical to understand here.

Also important to understand is the fact that those in the ecclesia have been called of the Father, have repented, and have had their sins forgiven so they now stand blameless before their Father in heaven. They have had their sins paid for by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the perfect, sinless sacrifice for the imperfect, sinful human beings that we have been (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13; I John 2:12). The strong, hard heart has been removed from the lives of the elect (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26), and they now walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4), in the footsteps of Jesus the Messiah, the second Adam (I Corinthians 15:45). They are washed clean, made white in the blood of the Lamb of God (Revelation 1:5; 7:14). Thus, in the Father’s eyes the ecclesia is perfect, and the members of it can approach Him directly as a perfect Father.

Now we are beginning to see how the concept of perfection applies to us as flesh and blood human beings. Living in the flesh we are also subject to the pulls of the flesh ... which pulls we are to resist or, as Paul said, “But I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection ...” (I Corinthians 9:27). This battle of the Spirit versus the flesh is no different than for any of the saints in years gone by, for even Elijah was “... a man subject to like passions as we are ...” (James 5:17). Perfection then lies in putting down the lusts of the flesh from one’s life, and instead filling up that life with Jesus Christ and our Father, with their qualities of the Spirit that He has placed within us:

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the

Lord: I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be My people” (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33).

“But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His” (Romans 8:9).

Let us now look at the instances where *perfect* is used in the Scriptures. I will concentrate on the New Testament, where the issue of being perfect is addressed by far the most rigorously. The word *perfect* is used 42 times in the New Testament. In a few cases the word is used as a modifier, so in those cases will not help in this study. The noun form of *perfect* will be examined here. The words for *perfect* used are as follows:

teleios (5046, used 17 times) = complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.), completeness; translated “full age, man, perfect.”

teleioo (5048, used 13 times) = to complete, i.e. (literally) accomplish, or (figuratively) consummate (in character); translated “consecrate, finish, fulfill, make perfect, perfect.”

katartizo (2675, used 5 times) = to complete thoroughly, i.e. repair (literally or figuratively) or adjust; translated “fit, frame, mend, make perfect, perfect, perfectly join together, prepare, restore.”

holokleria (3647, used 1 time) = integrity, i.e. physical wholeness; translated “perfect soundness.”

epiteleio (2005, used 1 time) = to fulfill further (or completely), i.e. execute; by implication to terminate or undergo; translated “accomplish, do, finish, make perfect, perfect, perform, performance.”

artios (739, used 1 time) = fresh, i.e. (by implication) complete; translated “perfect”.

Let us examine some of the instances where *perfect* is used to describe this condition we are to possess.

“Be you therefore *perfect* (5046), even as your Father in heaven is *perfect* (5046)” (Matthew 5:48).

“Jesus said unto him, ‘If you will be *perfect* (5046), go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me’ “ (Matthew 19:21).

“The disciple is not above his master, but every one that is *perfect* (2675) shall be as his master” (Luke 6:40).

“Howbeit we speak wisdom [of God] among them that are *perfect* (5046) ...” (I Corinthians 2:6).

“And He said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you [Paul], for My strength is made *perfect* (5048) in weakness’ “ (II Corinthians 12:9).

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be *perfect* (2675), be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you: (II Corinthians 13:11).

“... till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect* (5046) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

“Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect* (5046), be thus minded [to press toward the mark for the high calling of the Father in Christ]...” (Philippians 3:15).

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, salutes you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand *perfect* (5046) and complete in all the will of God “ (Colossians 4:12).

“... that the man of God may be *perfect* (739), thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II

Timothy 3:17).

“... and *being made perfect* (5048), He became the author of eternal salvation onto all them that obey Him ...” (Hebrews 5:9).

“For the law *made nothing perfect* (5048), but the bringing in of a better hope did ...” (Hebrews 7:19).

“... God having provided some better thing for us, that they [the patriarchs and prophets] without us should not *be made perfect* (5048)” (Hebrews 11:40).

“But you are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men *made perfect* (5048)” (Hebrews 12:22-23).

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, *make you perfect* (2675) in every good work to do His will ...” (Hebrews 13:20-21).

“But let patience have her *perfect* (5046) work, that you may be *perfect* (5046) and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4).

“See how faith worked with his [Abraham’s] works, and by works was faith *made perfect* (5048)” (James 2:22).

“For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word the same is a *perfect* (5046) man, able to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2).

“But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, *make you perfect* (2675), establish, strengthen, settle you” (I

Peter 5:10).

“Herein is our love *made perfect* (5048), that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in the world” (I John 4:17).

These are not all of the Scriptures that use *perfect*, but enough are included here to show that all of the meanings of the word, whether translated from *teleios*, *teleioo*, *katartizo*, or *artios*, imply “being or becoming complete, freshened in content, or, as *katartizo* implies, repaired and adjusted to the character of Jesus Christ and our Father”. We are incomplete without the Spirit of God within us, and cannot even begin to express the fruits of His Spirit without it.

Thus, whenever we are told by our Father in heaven to “be perfect”, He means we must put on the character of Him by expressing the Spirit He has given us at baptism and the laying on of hands. We are to “keep under” our physical nature that wants to serve the self, and rely on the Father through Jesus Christ to deliver us from this body of death. Our bodies can never be totally perfect in all of its thoughts, words, and deeds because the Spirit from God inhabits this carnal and imperfect physical body, but as our Spirit brings into subjection that fleshly body we can indeed attain greater completeness in expressing Christ-like character.

Our Spirit will always be pure and complete, for it is a gift of our Father, but our flesh will fail us unless conquered by that Spirit. Therein lies the daily, moment-by-moment challenge of the true Son of God: to thoroughly complete, repair, and adjust our total being to be like God. We will never attain that perfect completeness, but our Father will forgive and continue to keep us in a state of purity and holiness unto the marriage supper at the end of the age, arrayed in white linen “... for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:8).

Thus, when the Father says “Be you perfect ...”, He means the process of the flesh being brought into captivity by the flawless Spirit He has put in us. Strive to complete the process of bringing every thought into subjection to obedience to Jesus Christ (II

Corinthians 10:5). It is well worth the effort, for we know that "... the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).