

# Matthew 5:48 Commentary

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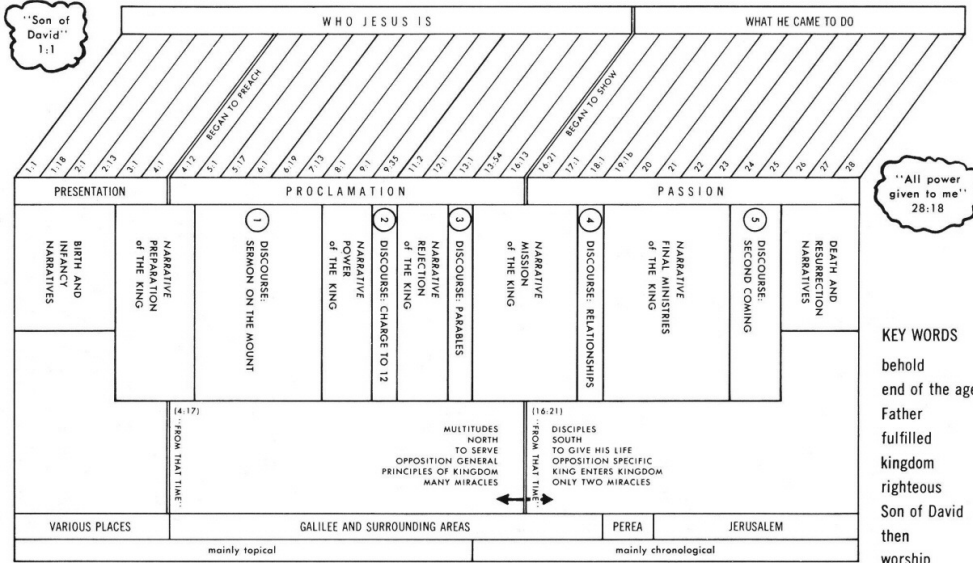
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## Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW CONTAINS  
15 PARABLES  
20 MIRACLES

KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of  
Jesus Christ, the son of David, the  
son of Abraham."

2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?  
for we have seen his star in the east, and are  
come to worship him."

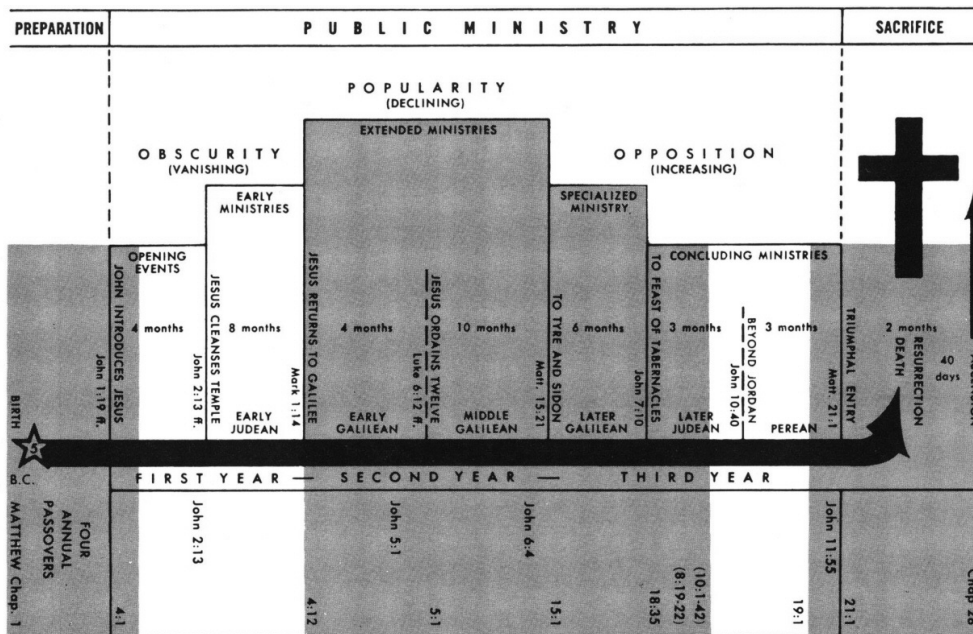


Click chart to enlarge

Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission

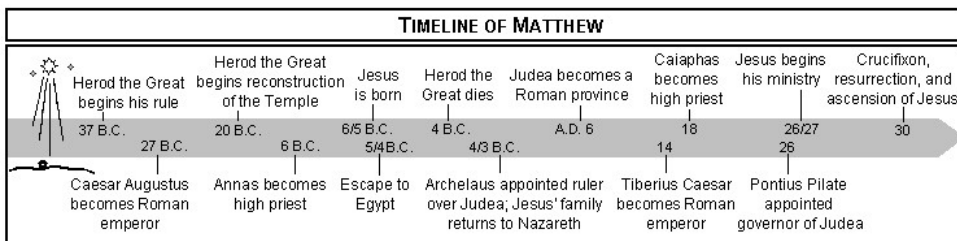
Another Chart from Charles Swindoll

## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)



Click chart to enlarge

Jesus Birth and Early Years  
Leading up to the Sermon on the Mount  
Matthew 1-7



Source: Ryrie Study Bible

**Greek:** [Esesthe \(2PFMI\)](#) [oun humeis teleioi os o pater humon o ouranios teleios estin.](#) (3SPAI)

**Amplified:** You, therefore, must be perfect [growing into complete maturity of godliness in mind and character, having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity], as your heavenly Father is perfect. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

**NLT:** But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Philips:** No, you are to be perfect, like your Heavenly Father. ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

**Wuest:** Therefore, as for you, you shall be those who are complete in your character, even as your Father in heaven is complete in His being.

**Young's Literal:** ye shall therefore be perfect, as your Father who is in the heavens is perfect.

**THEREFORE YOU ARE TO BE PERFECT AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT: [Esesthe \(2PFMI\)](#) [oun humeis teleioi os o pater humon o ouranios teleios estin.](#) (3SPAI):**

- **You are to be perfect** - Ge 17:1; Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:26; Deut 18:13; Job 1:1,2,3; Ps 37:37; Luke 6:36,40; 2 Cor 7:1; 13:9,11; Php 3:12, 13, 14, 15; Col 1:28; 4:12; Jas 1:4; 1 Pe 1:15,16
- **As your Heavenly Father** - Mt 5:16,45; Eph 3:1; Eph 5:1,2; 1 Jn 3:3
- Matthew Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Therefore - (term of conclusion)** Based on what He has just said about the need to demonstrate in one's life those things He has just described such as going the extra mile (now we know where this common saying comes from!), loving enemies and even praying for them, etc.

**C H Spurgeon** exhorts all blood bought, heaven bound sons of God to "Stretch towards the highest conceivable standard, and be not satisfied till you reach it."

**You are to be** - This phrase is interpreted by many in the sense of a future command. Jesus clearly intends it as an exhortation in light of all He has already said. We are called to be lights in this present darkness and the best light shines like the Father and gives glory to Him. Others see in this statement a promise -- "*you shall therefore be perfect*" (Young's Literal). The pronoun **you** is emphatic and clearly charges those who would be His followers to be **perfect**.

**To be (2076) (estin)** is **present tense** indicating that this is continually **to be** the goal to which the believer is ever straining and stretching toward in this life. This charge by our Lord, reminds one of Paul's great declaration...

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (see note [Philippians 3:14](#))

**You are to be perfect** - This phrase without a doubt is the most unsettling, even shocking aspect of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount for if the gauge of righteousness is absolute perfection, what hope is there for anyone? Jesus eliminated all human standards of morality and conduct when He spoke forth these words for even the "righteous" Pharisees, who were generally considered to be the embodiment of the highest human righteousness, could not qualify according to this standard. Jesus however did not create a new standard, for God has never had any other standard for man other than perfect holiness (see Lev 11:44, **notes** 1 Peter 1:15; 16)

**El Shaddai** (note) (our Sufficiency) gave a similar charge (to "be ye perfect") to **Abraham, Moses** recording ...

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty (**El Shaddai**); Walk before Me, and be **blameless** (tamiym [root means "complete"] = single-hearted, without blame, sincere, wholly devoted to the Lord). (Genesis 17:1)

In **Leviticus** God declared...

I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and **be holy; for I am holy**. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. (Leviticus 11:44)

We also see that what Jesus says in His sermon closely parallels what Moses recorded in **Deuteronomy**...

You shall be **blameless** (Septuagint translates the Hebrew word *tamiym* [root that means "complete" and so single-hearted, without blame, sincere, wholly devoted to the Lord. *Tamiym* is used to describe the Lord in Job 37:16, 2 Sa 22:31. It describes sacrificial animals without blemish or spot - no defects] with **teleios** the same word Jesus uses in Mt 5:48 for "perfect") before the LORD your God. (Deut 18:13)

**Spurgeon** alludes to the **promise aspect** of Matthew 5:48 in his book **When Christ Returns**, writing that Christ will be glorified for then...

We will be "perfect, even as [our] Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Truly, beloved, He who works this in us will be a wonder. Christ will be admired and adored because of this grand result. O mighty Master, with what strange moral alchemy did You work to turn that morosely dispositioned man into a mass of love! How did You work to lift that selfish lover of mammon up from his hoarded gains to make him find his gain in You? How did You overcome that proud spirit, that fickle spirit, that lazy spirit, that lustful spirit—how did You contrive to take all these away? How did You exterminate the roots of sin, even the fine root hairs, out of Your redeemed, so that not one tiny filament remains? (When Christ Returns)

**John MacArthur** - Because God is perfect, those who are truly his children will move on in the direction of his perfect standard. If you are stalled, or if you are slipping in the opposite direction, it is right that you examine yourself. Pursuing the standard of perfection does not mean we can never fail. It means that when we fail we deal with it. Those with true faith will fail—and in some cases, fail pathetically and frequently—but a genuine believer will, as a pattern of life, be confessing sin and coming to the Father for forgiveness (1 John 1:9). **Perfection is the standard. Direction is the test.** If your life does not reveal growth in grace and righteousness and holiness, you need to examine the reality of your faith—even if you believe you have done great things in the name of Christ. ([MacArthur, J., F. The Gospel According to Jesus](#))

In his book the [Vanishing Conscience](#), **Dr MacArthur** makes an interesting statement that applies to the high standard Jesus called us to in Matthew 5:48 - "It is folly to think that being imperfect somehow provides us with a legitimate excuse to exempt us from God's perfect standard. ([The Vanishing Conscience](#))

**Pentecost** writes that now...

our Lord answers the question uppermost in the minds of His hearers,

**How good does a man have to be to please God?**

Christ's answer was,

"As good as God is."

God is not satisfied with anything less than absolute perfection. How good does a man have to be to stand in the presence of God? He has to be as good as God is. If one falls the slightest degree short of the standard of God's inviolable, unalterable holiness, he is unacceptable to God. What is God's standard?

"Be ye therefore as perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."...

God does not hate; therefore, if a man is as perfect as God is, he will not hate (Mt 5:21-26).

God does not lust; if a man is as perfect as God is, he will not lust (Mt 5:27-32).

God does not deceive; if a man is as perfect as God is, he will not deceive (Mt 5:33-37).

God does not retaliate for injury done; if a man is as perfect as God is, he will not retaliate. He will not stand on his own rights (Mt 5:39-42).

God does not discriminate in His response to needs; if a man is perfect, he will love not only his friends but also his enemies (Mt 5:43-47). These are the marks of a truly godly man. ([Pentecost, J. D. Design for living: Lessons in Holiness from the Sermon on the Mount. Kregel Publications](#))

**Perfect** (5046) (**teleios** from *télos* = goal, purpose) means one who has attained to the end (aim) or to the intended goal (*telos*). If anything has fully attained that for which it is designed it is *perfect* (*teleios*). **Teleios** was used to refer to the maturity of an adult, which is the end or aim to which the child points. Thus it denotes those who have attained the full development of innate powers, in contrast to those who are still in the undeveloped state (children). **Teleios** signifies consummate soundness, and includes the idea of being whole.

**Teleios** (perfect) is often translated "mature", but in the context the meaning is that of **perfection**, because the heavenly Father is

the **standard**. We must measure ourselves not by others but by the Father. To **be perfect** is essentially the sum of all that Jesus teaches us in the **Sermon on the Mount** and ultimately is the sum of all that is taught in Scripture. The "sons" are to **be perfect**, as their heavenly Father is **perfect**. That perfection is **absolute perfection** and includes our **words** (Matthew 5:33-35, 5:36-37), our **responses to injuries** (Matthew 5:38-39, 5:40-42), and our **dealings with our enemies** (Matthew 5:43-45, 5:46-48). The great purpose of salvation, the goal of the gospel, and the great desire of the Father is that men would be conformed to the image of His Son, the only One Who ever lived a perfect life. If a man could live the way Jesus has told us to in this chapter, he would truly be **perfect**.

Perfection is our continual goal in this life, but in the life to come will be our everlasting possession and experience.

**A T Robertson** explains that perfect "comes from **telos**, end, goal, limit. Here it is the goal set before us, the absolute standard of our Heavenly Father. The word is used also for relative perfection as of adults compared with children."

Such pursuit of **perfection** in this present earthly life is clearly impossible in one's own power. To those who wonder how Jesus can demand (command) the impossible, He later says, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Mt 19:26, Mk 10:27) (**IM**-possible but **HIM**-possible!) Holy-ness requires a Holy-Source, the Holy Spirit.

**THOUGHT** - Are you learning to '**walk by the Spirit**' that you might not carry out those every present desires of your fallen, sinful flesh (Gal 5:16+)?

What God **commands and demands**, He **empowers and enables** that it might be accomplished. As one person has phrased it...

**You can't. He never said you could.**  
But He can and He always said He would.

For believers, it is Christ in us the hope of Glory (Col 1:27-note) Who empowers us by His indwelling Spirit (Gal 5:16, 17, 18, 24-see notes Gal 5:16; 17; 18; 24; cp Ro 8:13-note) to live the way the Father commands. Christ is now our life (Col 3:4-note). As one person has noted, if you remove the "a" from "Christian" and place it at the front what you see is "A **Christ** In"!

Paul beautifully expressed the "divine tension" of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in his letter to the **Philippians** calling on them to...

**work out** (present imperative = command to do this continually) your salvation (this is our responsibility) with fear and trembling, (but then he explains how this is even possible) for it is God Who is at work in you (continually - present tense), both to will (He continually [present tense] gives us even the "want to" so to speak) and to work (He continually [present tense] energizes the working out of our salvation) for His good pleasure (this is the goal - the Father's good pleasure - pleasing to Him). (See notes Philippians 2:12; 2:13)

This same principle is even seen in the **Old Testament** where God promises the **New Covenant** to Israel (and by way of application to all who by grace through faith enter the New Covenant)...

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you (God's provision is His Spirit) and cause you to walk in My statutes (God's power), and you (man's responsibility) will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

In **Colossians** Paul illustrated this divine dynamic in his own life writing...

And we proclaim Him (Christ in us the hope or absolute assurance of glory), admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete (**teleios** - fully mature) in Christ. For this purpose (to present every man complete or fully mature in Christ) also I labor (present tense = continually working to the point of exhaustion) striving (present tense = continually agonizing) (**How was [and still is] this possible?**) according to His power (energeia - God's effectual working in believers) which mightily works (present tense = continually) within me (See **notes** Colossians 1:28; Colossians 1:29)

Paul reminded the saints at Colossae that Epaphras was praying for them...

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, **that you may stand perfect (teleios)** and fully assured in all the will of God. (see note Colossians 4:12)

In **Hebrews** we see this "tension" in the great prayer...

Now the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of

the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you (God's provision) in every good thing to do (man's part) His will, working in us (God's continual working) that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (See **notes** Hebrews 13:20; 21)

Regarding being **perfect**, **Paul** wrote...

Not that I have already obtained it, or **have** already **become perfect** (**teleioo** - accomplished or brought to an end or to the intended goal - which ultimately will be when we are **glorified**), but I press on (dioko = a verb which gives the picture of pursuing with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain a goal. The present tense = this was Paul's habitual practice, the warp and woof of his life) in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus (**to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect - when we see Christ we shall be like Him, and this will be the final and consummate fulfillment of His call for us to be perfect.**)

13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

14 I **press on** (dioko = a verb which gives the picture of pursuing with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain a goal. The present tense = this was Paul's habitual practice, the warp and woof of his life) toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, **as many as are perfect** (teleios = signifies consummate soundness and includes the idea of being hold. In believers the idea is not sinless perfection but full spiritual maturity), have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;

16 however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. (See **notes** Philippians 3:12; 13; 14; 15; 16)

Paul knew that his record had already been cleared before God on the basis of his faith in Christ and in that sense he was perfect (positionally) but he was also aware of the practical work of his being perfected in this present life and the future prospect of absolute perfection in the life to come writing that "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ Who **will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory** by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (See notes Philippians 3:20; 21)

At the risk making Jesus' call to **be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect** look too simplistic or too "mechanical", the table below attempts to demonstrate the three aspects of Christian perfection...

THREE ASPECTS of CHRISTIAN "PERFECTION"				
Positional Perfection	Justification	Position in Christ	By Faith	Eph 2:8,9 2 Cor 5:17 2 Cor 5:21
Practical Perfection	Sanctification	Powered by Christ	By Faith	Phil 2:12,13 2 Co 7:1
Prospective Perfection	Glorification	Presence of Christ	By Sight	Phil 3:20, 21 1Jn 3:2

(See related discussion - Three Tenses of Salvation)

**What should motivate us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect?** Paul exhorts the saints in Corinth...

Therefore, having these promises (read them in the preceding passages and let them motivate you = 2 Cor 6:16, 17, 18) beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, **perfecting** (epiteleoo= fulfill completely. Bring about a result according to an objective. Present tense = our continuing practice - this speaks of [progressive sanctification](#)) **holiness** in the fear of God (NOT A SHAKING FEAR, BUT A REVERENTIAL FEAR, A FEAR THAT WE MIGHT "DISAPPOINT" HIM). (2 Corinthians 7:1-[note](#))

**How can we be sure that we will attain the state of perfection Jesus calls us to?** Again the apostle Paul would seem to address this declaring to the saints at Philippi...

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you **will perfect** (epiteleoo) it until the day of Christ Jesus (See note Philippians 1:6)



**Comment:** The **day of Christ Jesus** (cf 3 uses in Bible of "Day of Christ" = Phil. 1:6; Phil. 1:10; Phil. 2:16) refers to the glorious day of His Second Coming when faith shall become sight (cf 1 John 3:2+), and then face to face what we now I know in part, then we shall know fully just as we also have been fully known.(1 Cor 13:12)

**Henry Morris** explains Jesus' call to **be perfect** this way "Jesus knew no believer could be sinlessly **perfect** (Mt 6:14, 15-notes "transgressions") in this life. Nevertheless, this must be the standard and the goal--not for gaining salvation, but for living the Christian life. The word **perfect** also can be understood as "complete" or "fully mature," but this state is no more attainable than sinless perfection--in fact, they are really the same. We do have such a standing in Christ, and we should perpetually seek to fulfill this standard by God's help. ([Matthew 5 Notes from Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Harry Ironside** writes that "This is **perfection** in the sense of the complete absence of partiality, thus imitating Him who is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), but who lavishes His favors on just and unjust alike. God's choicest blessings are for those who demonstrate the same spirit of reverence for Him and meekness and compassion for others, which were seen in all their fullness in our blessed Lord as He walked this earth in the days of His flesh (He 5:7-note). That spirit, which is beyond the reach of the natural man, is fulfilled in those who have received a new life and nature through trusting in Christ as their Savior. No adverse circumstances can disturb the serenity of those who know the Lord and who acknowledge His authority over their lives.

Surely every right-thinking person must admit that the righteousness inculcated by our Lord in this matchless discourse (which has won the admiration of intelligent people everywhere) is a standard far beyond that to which the natural man can attain. It is only when one has been born again that he can live on this high plane. When men talk of the Sermon on the Mount being religion enough for them, they only show how little they understand the meaning of our Master's words. He portrays a **supernatural life** that can be lived only by **supernatural power**--the **power that the Holy Spirit** gives to him who believes the gospel. ([Matthew 5 Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

**Wiersbe** - The word **perfect** in Matthew 5:48 **does not imply sinlessly perfect**, for that is impossible in this life (though it is a good goal to strive for, cf Hebrews 12:14). It suggests completeness, maturity, as the sons of God. The Father loves His enemies (Ro 5:10) and seeks to make them His children, and we should assist Him (**ED**: IN OTHER WORDS IT IS NOT "LET GO AND LET GOD" BUT MORE LIKE "LET GOD AND LET'S GO!")! ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#)) (Bold added)

Some like **John Wesley** used Matthew 5:48 to propound the aberrant teaching of so-called "Christian perfectionism" which is clearly counter to John's statement that "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8+). **Naselli** writes that in regard to Matthew 5:48 "Wesley felt compelled not to dull Scripture's razor-edge as he understood it. He detested the people's calling perfectionism "Mr. Wesley's doctrine" because in his view "it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ." ([Let Go and Let God: A Survey and Analysis of the Keswick Movement](#))

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What is the meaning of perfection in the Bible?](#)
- [Is sinless perfection possible in this life?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about perfectionism?](#)
- [Is there a second blessing subsequent to salvation?](#)
- [What is entire sanctification?](#)
- [Why did Jesus tell people to 'go and sin no more' if sinlessness is impossible?](#)
- [Why do so many Christians fail the "practice what you preach" standard?](#)
- [Why You Should Let Go of 'Let Go and Let God'](#)
- [What is a carnal Christian?](#) Here is a brief excerpt from the discussion of this topic-

"The key thing to understand is that while a Christian can be, for a time, carnal, a true Christian will not remain carnal for a lifetime. Some have abused the idea of a "carnal Christian" by saying that it is possible for people to come to faith in Christ and then proceed to live the rest of their lives in a completely carnal manner, with no evidence of being born again or a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). **Such a concept is completely unbiblical.** James 2 makes it abundantly clear that genuine faith will always result in good works. Ephesians 2:8-10 declares that while we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, that salvation will result in works. Can a Christian, in a time of failure and/or rebellion, appear to be carnal? Yes. Will a true Christian remain carnal? No." (**Ed comment:** The reason this topic is so significant is that influential writers such as Lewis S Chafer divided Christians into two groups - carnal and spiritual in his work "Holy Spirit, vi; cf. p 190.).

**Spurgeon** has this devotional thought on "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7) writing...

As He is in the light! Can we ever attain to this? Will we ever be able to walk as clearly in the light as He whom we call "Our Father" is, of whom it is written, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5)? Certainly, this is the model which is set before us, for the Savior Himself said, "**Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect**" (Matt. 5:48). Although we may feel that we can never rival the perfection of God, we are yet to seek after it and never be satisfied until we attain to it. (Daily Help)

**Spurgeon** commenting on **Matthew 5:48** helps us understand what it means to be perfect...

Rise out of ordinary manhood. Get beyond what others might expect of you. Have a high standard. "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Stretch towards the highest conceivable standard, and be not satisfied till you reach it.

We should reach after completeness in love,- fullness of love to all around us. Love is the bond of perfectness; and if we have perfect love, it will form in us a perfect character. Here is that which we aim at,-perfection like that of God; here is the manner of obtaining it,-namely, by abounding in love; and this suggests the question of how far we have proceeded in this heavenly direction, and also the reason why we should persevere in it even to the end, because as children we ought to resemble our Father.

**Scriptural perfection is attainable, it lies rather in proportion than in degree. A man's character may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing; and yet such a man will be the very first to admit that the grace which is in him is at best in its infancy, and though perfect as a child in all its parts, it has not yet attained to the perfection of full-grown manhood.**

What a mark is set before us by our Perfect King, who, speaking from his mountain-throne, saith, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"!

Lord, give what Thou dost command; then both the grace and the glory will be Thine alone. (Amen)

In his **sermon** ([God's Time for Comforting](#)) **Spurgeon** writes...

Though you cannot be **perfect**, yet you must want to be **perfect**, and there must not be any sin which you knowingly spare. Cut them in pieces, every one of them; as soon as you know that anything is wrong, I pray you to have such a tender conscience that you will seek to escape from it; for, as long as you harbor even one of them, comfort will never come to you.

Another **sermon** Spurgeon (on Colossians 2:6 - see note) makes a comment that relates to **be perfect**...

Well, then; keep there! Keep there! Never get an inch beyond that position. When you get sanctified, still look to Christ as if you were unsanctified. When you are on the verge of being glorified, look to Him as if you were just newly come out of the hole of the pit. Hang upon Christ, you who are the best, just as though you were the worst. The same faith which saved Mary Magdalene, which saved Saul of Tarsus, must save you in the moment, when you shall be the nearest to the perfect image of Christ Jesus. **It is "none but Jesus" now to your soul; let it be "none but Jesus, — none but Jesus," as long as you live.** (See full sermon by Spurgeon - Colossians 2:6 Walk for a Time to Come)

**Ryrie** explains that regarding His call to **be perfect** Jesus does not mean "without sin, but mature and complete in the likeness of God." ([The Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**Criswell** - The idea of gaining maturity does not fully interpret this quotation from Lev. 19:2. **Perfection** is attainable only when evil is vanquished and the kingdom citizen is glorified. His present life ought to exhibit maturity and progress toward that ultimate goal of **perfection. Whatever the interpretation, the demand for perfection is not to be weakened.** Rather, Matthew magnifies the fact that the righteousness demanded of kingdom citizens cannot be attained on the basis of merit, but must be given through mercy. This statement summarizes Mt 5:17-48. ([Believer's Study Bible](#))

**James Montgomery Boice** explains that in order to **be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect**...

you must turn away from your own efforts completely and receive instead the perfection which God has already taken steps to provide for you. Nothing that you will ever do will be perfect. Only what God does is perfect. Hence, if you are to reach the perfection which God requires, it must be as the result of **His working for you and in you**...

In the eighteenth Psalm David speaks of perfection twice, once of God's perfection and once of man's. The point of the verses is that God is responsible for both kinds. In Psalm 18:30 David writes, "As for God, his way is perfect." Then two verses farther on he adds, "It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect" (Ps 18:32). Who is God? God is the One who is perfect.



What does he do? **God works to perfect sinful men.** ([Sermon on the Mount](#)) (Bolding and underlining added for emphasis)

**MacDonald** explains that Jesus' "word **perfect** must be understood in the light of the context. It does not mean sinless or flawless. The previous verses explain that to be **perfect** means to love those who hate us, to pray for those who persecute us, and to show kindness to both friend and foe. **Perfection** here is that spiritual maturity which enables a Christian to imitate God in dispensing blessing to everybody without partiality. ([Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**The Preacher's Commentary** explains that...

The commandment to **be perfect** in the same way our Father is perfect is to be seen in this context of love. His perfect love is without discrimination; our love is to be open to all people, friends and enemies. We should not read the word "perfect" as a philosophical or moralistic perfection. As Bruce Larson has said of moralistic perfectionism,

"It will drive you up the wall. You can't be all right and be well!"

The Greek word is **teleios**, a word which carries the meaning of culmination, of maturity, of achievement in function. We were created in the image of God, and having perverted this image in sin we are re-created in grace and predestined "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Ro 8:29KJV-note). The goal of the disciple is to live in this perfection, this **teleios**, this extension of the love of Christ. It is an active word and, in context, means that our love must be all-inclusive as God's is all-inclusive. ([Augsburger, M. S & Ogilvie, L. J. The Preacher's Commentary Series. Thomas Nelson](#))

**Gregg Allen on "Be perfect"** - And finally, we are to obey this command to love our enemies because, in doing so, we live consistently with our glorious destiny. Jesus closes with these words, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (v. 48). The word that is used here is the Greek word **teleios**; and it means "to be brought to completion" or "to be fully accomplished". And I believe it's best to see it in its context. Jesus isn't saying that we can expect to be as "perfect" (in an absolute sense) as our Father while we are on this earth. Rather, He is saying that, with respect to the command to love, we are to be as complete in that love as our Father is. We are to love, as it were, without any limitations or boundaries. Elsewhere, Jesus tells us, ". . . Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Elsewhere in the Bible, God tells us, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). In all that we do in imitation of our Father, we are to be as complete in it and as full in it as He Himself is; and this means that we are to love in a way that is complete and full - even to the degree of loving our enemies, just as He also does. I believe this is intended to be taken as a command. That's why the word "therefore" is there. But I can't help but notice that it is stated in the future tense; that is, that we "shall" be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. It's not only a command, but a promise. Jesus not only commands us to love our enemies; but He also entices us with the promise that, one day, we will be perfected in love as our Father in heaven is Himself perfect in love. And that makes this a wonderful call to become increasingly now (though imperfectly so) what we will one day completely be in glory! And so, we should love our enemies; because when we do so, we're simply acting in a manner that is consistent with our glorious destiny in Christ. It sounds humanly impossible, doesn't it? And of course it is. As someone has said, coming to terms with the last command in Matthew 5 - to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect - is the fastest way to drive us to the first promise in the chapter - "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . ." But in all these commands of our Savior, I have noticed that it always comes back to the character of God. We are to be what Jesus calls us to be, because that's the way He Himself is; and He is what He is because He is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). No one has seen God at any time, as the Bible tells us; but "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18). Even He loved His enemies while He hung on the cross; praying for them, and saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). If we would be His followers, how could we seek to do less than He does? Dear brothers and sisters in Christ; in His power and by His indwelling Holy Spirit, let's invite Him to teach us to love perfectly - even to the point of loving our enemies, because that's the way God our Father Himself loves. After all, isn't that how He first loved us? ([Sermon](#))

**William Barclay** summarizes this section - **Here we have the key to one of the most difficult sentences in the New Testament, the sentence with which this passage finishes. Jesus said: "You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."** On the face of it that sounds like a commandment which cannot possibly have anything to do with us. There is none of us who would even faintly connect ourselves with perfection.

The Greek word for perfect is **teleios** (Greek #5046). This word is often used in Greek in a very special way. It has nothing to do with what we might call abstract, philosophical, metaphysical perfection. A victim which is fit for a sacrifice to God, that is a victim which is without blemish, is **teleios** (Greek #5046). A man who has reached his full-grown stature is **teleios** (Greek #5046) in contradistinction to a half-grown lad. A student who has reached a mature knowledge of his subject is **teleios** (Greek #5046) as opposed to a learner who is just beginning, and who as yet has no grasp of things. To put it in another way, the Greek idea of perfection is functional. A thing is perfect if it fully realizes the purpose for which it was planned, and designed, and made. In point of fact, that meaning is involved in the derivation of the word. **Teleios** (Greek #5046) is the adjective formed from the noun **telos** (Greek #5056). **Telos** (Greek #5056) means an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal. A thing is **teleios** (Greek #5046), if it realizes the purpose for

which it was planned; a man is perfect if he realizes the purpose for which he was created and sent into the world.

Let us take a very simple analogy. Suppose in my house there is a screw loose, and I want to tighten and adjust this screw. I go out to the ironmonger and I buy a screw-driver. I find that the screw-driver exactly fits the grip of my hand; it is neither too large nor too small, too rough nor too smooth. I lay the screw-driver on the slot of the screw, and I find that it exactly fits. I then turn the screw and the screw is fixed. In the Greek sense, and especially in the New Testament sense, that screw-driver is *teleios* (Greek #5046), because it exactly fulfilled the purpose for which I desired and bought it. So, then, a man will be *teleios* (Greek #5046) if he fulfils the purpose for which he was created. For what purpose was man created? The Bible leaves us in no doubt as to that. In the old creation story we find God saying, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Man was created to be like God. The characteristic of God is this universal benevolence, this unconquerable goodwill, this constant seeking of the highest good of every man. The great characteristic of God is love to saint and to sinner alike. No matter what men do to him, God seeks nothing but their highest good.

**The hymn has it of Jesus:  
"Thy foes might hate, despise, revile,  
Thy friends unfaithful prove;  
Unwearied in forgiveness still,  
Thy heart could only love."**

It is when man reproduces in his life (Ed Comment: Ultimately WE cannot accomplish this feat -- only as we surrender to the Spirit's enabling power can we "reproduce" fruit the Spirit births) the unwearied, forgiving, sacrificial benevolence of God that he becomes like God, and is therefore perfect in the New Testament sense of the word. To put it at its simplest, the man who cares most for men is the most perfect man. It is the whole teaching of the Bible that we realise our manhood only by becoming godlike. The one thing which makes us like God is the love which never ceases to care for men, no matter what men do to it. We realize our manhood, we enter upon Christian perfection, when we learn to forgive as God forgives, and to love as God loves. ([William Barclay's Daily Study Bible - Matthew 5](#))

**The Pulpit Commentary** has a lengthy explanation (and admittedly a bit difficult to follow) on **be perfect** writing that...

In this respect, viz. love to others, you shall admit, says our Lord, no lower ideal than that of maturity, even such maturity as is found in Him who sends sun and rain on all alike. Some (Augustine, Trench) have seen in this a merely relative maturity, itself capable of further development; but the subject rather demands absolute and final maturity. This does not imply that man will ever have such fulness of love as the Father has, but that he will fully and completely attain to that measure of love to which he as a created being was intended to attain...

The simple and straightforward meaning of the verse, however, is this—**You shall take no lower standard in love to enemies than God shows to those who ill treat him, and you shall, in fact, attain to this standard.** Upon this... there arises the question which has been of so much importance in all ages of the Church—

What is the measure of attainment that is really possible for Christ's disciples upon earth? Ought they not to expect to live perfect lives?

But the text gives no warrant for such an assertion. No doubt it says that attainment to maturity—to perfection according to creaturely limits—is eventually possible. But when this attainment can be made is not stated (**Ed note:** When we are glorified our perfection will be perfected!). Many will, indeed, affirm that, as our Lord is giving directions to His disciples concerning things in this life, the attainment also is affirmed to be possible in this life. But this by no means follows. Christ gives the command, and by the form of it implies that it shall be carried out to the full. But this is quite consistent with the conception of a gradually increasing development of love which, in fact will attain **maturity**, a state in which God's love has ever been; but not immediately and not before the final completion of all Christ's work in us (**Ed note:** I am not sure what the author means in this statement - he seems to be alluding to the ultimate perfection when saints are glorified.).

The words (in Matthew 5:48) form, indeed, a **promise** as well as a **command**, but the absence of a statement of time forbids us to claim the verse as a warrant for asserting that the *teleiotes* referred to can be attained in this life. Trench ('Syn.', § xxii.) explains... "The Christian shall be **perfect**, yet not in the sense in which some of the sects preach the doctrine of perfection, who, so soon as their words are looked into, are found either to mean nothing which they could not have expressed by a word less liable to misunderstanding; or to mean something which no man in this life shall attain, and which he who affirms he has attained is deceiving himself, or others, or both." ([Matthew 5 Commentary scroll down for Homilies](#))

A. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies," -- The Old Testament implied that believers are to love all men but the Lord Jesus makes it even more specific by saying the Christians are to love their enemies. To love a person, who injures you, is humanly impossible. Only God can place this kind of love in the human heart.

ILLUSTRATION: Saint Augustine said good for good is natural; evil for good is devilish; but good for evil is divine.

B. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." -- Our Lord teaches that Christians are to counteract evil by doing good. When a person does us a wrong, we are to do him a good. When he curses us we are to wish only good on him. When he persecutes us, we are to pray for God's blessing on him.

C. "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:" -- One does not become a child of God by loving his enemies. Besides, the context tells us that He is talking to His disciples who are already Christians. By loving their enemies Christ's disciples show and display the fact they are godlike. Love is a definite test of our discipleship (John 13: 34, 35).

D. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." -- God is good to the saved and unsaved alike in his natural blessings and so should the Christian be good to all men indiscriminately.

POINT: Regardless of race, color or culture, Christians are to love all men because God is love, and Christian's are to reflect to all men the God of love.

E. "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" -- Love responds to love and any one can have that kind of love, but there is no real reward in loving that way. Real love learns to love the unlovely.

F. "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?" -- Love is to go beyond our Christian brethren to all men. But it is to be extended even further to those who are our enemies. When we can love our enemies, we are beginning to enter in to Christlike love. When we do, there is no need to be revengeful. "More than others" -- There is a higher standard for the followers of Christ.

G. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." -- This has been a very perplexing problem for many because they have not known the Greek. How can any Christian be perfect as God in heaven is perfect? The words "be ye perfect" are a quotation for the Old Testament, from Deuteronomy 18:13. The Hebrew word translated perfect means whole or complete. The Greek word here means complete or mature. God is totally complete and supremely mature in His love towards all. In the same way, Christians are to have a complete and mature love towards all.

POINT: It is not an incomplete and imperfect I love (that is, just for friends) but a complete and mature love (embrace even our enemies).

## VI. CONCLUSION

A. The Bible tells us that God is love and that He loved men when they were yet His enemies. Man naturally is a rebel and alienated from God. But when men were opposed to God, God sent His Son to die on the cross. He loved the unlovely. ([Sermon](#))

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### Brian Bell Sermon Notes -

Perfect ≠ sinlessly perfect. (yet that is our goal)

B. Teleios = Totality, whole, w/o blemish. Fully developed. Mature in mental & moral character. Full development, growth into maturity of godliness.

1. We spiritually don't grow all at once, as we don't physically.

a) 1st we're a baby, then child, then young adult, then adults. Be adults. Be grown up. Be Mature in these areas discussed.

C. It's moving from ignorance (baby stage), to self centeredness (child stage), to God & other centeredness (young adult). to intentionality & strategy (parent stage).

D. Maturity to me is when a person moves from church & their christianity being all about them. Them enjoying the service, appreciating the worship song selection, getting ministered to, being fed, them getting. Maturity moves to them giving.

1. Them identifying their gifts to be used for the edifying of others. Them doing their all to make sure others are getting something out of the service (eg. nursery helper, so parents can here message w/o distraction). Them giving of their time, talent, & treasures. Them connecting to God & others & not waiting for someone to connect them. Them self-feeding & not waiting to get fed. Them moving from just doing to being.

2. Them deciding their yes means yes & no means no. Them turning cheeks, them suffering themselves to be defrauded, them going the 2nd mile, them giving or loaning to those in need. Them loving enemies & not just friends. Them blessing, doing good, & praying for not so nice people. Them showing love & greeting even evil men/women. Maturity's mark is emblazoned upon one who is growing & not remaining stagnant in their faith life.

3. It is moving from being needy, from seeing all what I can get, to noticing that there are others whom I can serve.

4. The final and real act of maturity is when one comes alongside to disciple someone, helping them to learn how to form there life around Jesus.

Love like Jesus. Minister grace to all people like Jesus. They are then parenting new believers. They are mature disciples. [Sermon](#)

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[Explore the Bible](#) - A Christian growing in godly perfection will demonstrate a love even for their enemies. Let me ask you to really think. What does the Lord hate? Does the Bible ever say He hates His enemy Satan? We know Christ while on the cross asked for forgiveness for those crucifying Him. Did He know Satan was behind the crucifixion? Of course He did and he still forgave. We are very much like Christ when we forgive, and it moves us more toward godly perfection. Christians must be different than the worldly person. Their expressions of love may be very meaningful, but the Christian must demonstrate love in areas above and beyond those of the lost person. We must allow Christ love to direct us to love everyone, and this is just part of Striving For Godly Perfection. Amen? Amen!

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[Gil Rugh](#) - What a high standard! God does not **call us to do** anything that He does not **enable us to do** (**ED COMMENT: AND HE HAS PROVIDED US WITH THE "ENABLER" WHO INDWELLS US AND GIVES US THE DESIRE AND POWER TO DO SUPERNATURALLY** WHAT IS OTHERWISE LITERALLY IMPOSSIBLE *NATURALLY*. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE WALKING "MIRACLES" MANIFESTING SUPERNATURAL LOVE WHO GIVE A PROPER PICTURE OF THEIR FATHER IN HEAVEN - Mt 5:16+ - SEE EXAMPLE OF AMISH BELOW). "Therefore you are to **be perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48). What a standard! We cannot expect to meet it fully in this life, but God forbid that we should cease to strive for it. In Philippians 3:14, Paul talked about pressing on "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." That needs to be our goal.

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[Michael Andrus](#) - I was absolutely amazed at the story of the [Amish](#) after the schoolhouse massacre in Pennsylvania (**ED: SEE AMISH RESPONSE**). These people immediately began to minister to the family of the man who killed their little girls. They attended the murderer's funeral (he committed suicide, you will recall—not to picket or to jeer but to pray for his wife and kids. In fact, more than half of those attending were Amish. "We sin, too," they said, embracing the widow of the man who killed their children. "Didn't Jesus tell us to forgive others as God has forgiven us?"<sup>vii</sup> They took some of the money given to help their own grieving families and gave it to the family of the man who will never get out of prison. That was loving one's enemy. ([Matthew 5:33-48 Abnormal Kingdom Living](#))

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**Reformation Study Bible** - The standard that God demands of His people is His own perfect character. God's perfection includes the love of benevolent grace (Mt 5:45). Although perfection is not attainable in this life, it is the goal of those who have become children of the Father (Phil. 3:12, 13).

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[Knox Chamblin](#) -

(1) The statement of Mt 5:43. Only the first part is found in the OT (Lev 19:18); the second part was inferred from that.

(2) The moral distinction. To understand Jesus' teaching here, we must acknowledge that there is real evil, and that we have enemies (they are not really friends who only appear to be foes) bent upon persecuting us (Mt 5:11).

(3) Radical love. The citizens of the kingdom must follow the model of their heavenly Father who by his common grace blesses the evil and the good, the righteous and the unrighteous (Mt 5:45). This kind of love, like his, must be **perfect** (Mt 5:48, *teleioi*). In this context, *teleioi* means not "mature" (God's love does not mature), nor "perfect" (disciples will never be perfect, either in this age or in the age to come), but "**all-inclusive**." Our love, like God's, must know no bounds (see NEB). It is to extend, not just to those who love us (Mt 5:46) nor just to fellow-Christians (Mt 5:47), but to enemies and non-believers as well. For support of this interpretation

of *teleioi*, cf. Lk 6:36+. Christian love extends beyond the bounds of the Christian community. For Jewish-Christians, the practical lesson was to love the Gentiles as God and Christ did (Mt 28:18-20), and also fellow-Jews who persecute them for becoming Christians (Mt 10:17).

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**Phil Newton** - The culmination of all that he has said about the kind of character involved in loving our enemies and praying for our persecutors is found in verse 48: "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The "therefore" brings it to a conclusion. Some think that this verse wraps up all of the instructions that Christ gives concerning the law, and that is surely true. But in a special way it focuses upon this command to love, for the command itself is the most difficult of all - and the most God-like of all that Christ has set forth for kingdom citizens. Language scholars point out that the grammar suggests both "you will be perfect" and "you must be perfect" as the intention of Christ. It is both a command and a promise [L. Morris, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 133]. As a promise we have great confidence that the Lord will perfect us on that day that we stand complete before Him (1 John 3:1-3). But how do we deal with the command? Some have taken this to imply that we can reach moral perfection in this life, but the preceding Beatitudes mitigate against this as does a host of Scriptures (e.g. 1 John).

All the commands ultimately point to the perfections of God. He is perfect in a final sense in that nothing can be added to the depths of his perfections. But we are to pursue perfection in a progressive sense. We look to Christ as our standard. We see that the Lord has "raised the bar" of the Christian's behavior to be nothing short of reflecting the life of Jesus Christ. Everything that we do should have that homing device built within that we are pursuing the perfection that Christ promises when we stand before His throne. This means that all of life is a pursuit - a faithful, persistent, never-giving-up, growth in grace pursuit of the perfection that belongs to our Lord. Leon Morris sums it up: "Jesus is calling on his followers to be mature people, attaining the end for which God has made them. God has set before us the highest standards; it is expected that we will press on to attain them" [134]. And He has provided the grace and promises for his people to do just that.

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**John Piper** asks - Where Does Power to Love Like This Come From? Now how can we do this? Where does power to love like this come from? Just think how astonishing this is when it appears in the real world! Could anything show the truth and power and reality of Christ more than this? Let me just give you part of the answer from Matthew 5:11-12, "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. 12 Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Jesus says that not only can you endure the mistreatment of the enemy, but you can also rejoice in it. Why? Because your reward in heaven is great. Which means that the command to love your enemy is a command to set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. The command to love your enemy is a command to find your hope and your satisfaction in God and his great reward—not in the way people treat you. The steadfast love of the Lord is better than life (Psalm 63:3). Loving your enemy doesn't earn you the reward of heaven. Treasuring the reward of heaven empowers you to love your enemy.

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**J Ligon Duncan** - Matthew Henry once said, "Christianity is more than humanity. We know more than others. We talk more the things of God than others. We profess more than others. We have been promised more than others. God has done more for us and therefore He justly expects more from us than of others. He calls on us to love the unlovable." And isn't that exactly what Christ is saying in verse 48? When He says, "You are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" Christ is not saying that a person can attain perfection in this life. You remember, it's the same Christ who's going to teach us to pray, "Forgive us our sins, forgive us our debts, forgive us our trespasses," who tells us to 'be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.' Christ is not expecting us to achieve perfection in this life, or He would not have given us that clause in the Lord's Prayer which asks God to forgive us! No, Christ is saying, 'Have the same kind of all embracing love that your heavenly Father has.'

Luke gives you the clue in Luke chapter 6. He translates 'be merciful' as your heavenly Father is merciful. You see here mercy is being contrasted to being mercenary. God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, is calling His people to love those who are both not in a position to reward us for our love, and even to love those who despite our love seek to abuse us. It is a love which loves not because of what it will get out of others, but it is a love implanted in our hearts by God Himself that enables us to love without anticipation or expectation of reward for that love, except from the heavenly Father. That is the love that the Lord Jesus is calling us to. And it's the love of God, my friends. If anything in this passage teaches you that this way is not a way of works righteousness, it's this passage, because this love is not a love that we can stoke up in ourselves. This is a love that only comes to us when God has taken up residence in our lives.

Think of God's words to Jonah. Jonah the prophet, a mighty man of God who had absolutely no compassion on the Ninevites. He wanted his people to have revival. He didn't want those Gentile Ninevites to have revival. God the Father says to him, in Jonah chapter 4 verses 10 and 11, words which spoke of His compassion not only on the people but even the animals. God the Father had compassion on those people who did not know their right hand from their left, and He wanted them to come and to enjoy the grace which is held in store for all those who embrace Him by faith. It's easy to love those in whom we delight. It's difficult to love those



who are not only different from us but those who use us and abuse us and seek to take advantage of us. John Stott has said, and this hits me right between the eyes: "Everybody believes in love. But not love for those who've injured us." Everybody believes in love. But not love for those who're outsiders.

You see my friends, if you want to measure whether you've gone beyond niceness to real Christian love, look at your hearts and ask yourselves: "How do I love those who have hurt me? How do I love those who hate me? How do I love those who have no claim on my love?" Then, you will see how far you have to go in love. Thank God, the Lord Jesus does not leave us to our own devices, for this love cannot be created by human effort. We must run back to Him. We must get more love to Christ if we are to grow in this kind of love to one another. You see, there is no humanly generated love that can enable you to love people in this sort of a self-sacrificial way. Only a living and loving relationship with the heavenly Father, an assurance that He has given you everything that you need in Christ, an assurance that all blessing awaits in glory, can enable you to love those who will take advantage of you. And that's precisely what Christ is calling you to. And that's precisely what Christ is calling me to. And if we would live this way for one day, there is no telling what would happen in our community. Amen.

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**Oswald Chambers** on Mt 5:48 - "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Our Lord's exhortation in these verses is to be generous in our behaviour to all men. In the spiritual life beware of walking according to natural affinities. Everyone has natural affinities; some people we like and others we do not like. We must never let those likes and dislikes rule in our Christian life. "If we walk in the light as God is in the light," God will give us communion with people for whom we have no natural affinity.

The Example Our Lord gives us is not that of a good man, or even of a good Christian, but of God Himself. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect," show to the other man what God has shown to you; and God will give us ample opportunities in actual life to prove whether we are perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. To be a disciple means that we deliberately identify ourselves with God's interests in other people. "That ye love one another; as I have loved you . . ."

The expression of Christian character is not good doing, but God-likeness. If the Spirit of God has transformed you within, you will exhibit Divine characteristics in your life, not good human characteristics. God's life in us expresses itself as God's life, not as human life trying to be godly. The secret of a Christian is that the supernatural is made natural in him by the grace of God (ED: AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD - cf Heb 10:29), and the experience of this works out in the practical details of life, not in times of communion with God. When we come in contact with things that create a buzz, we find to our amazement that we have power to keep wonderfully poised in the centre of it all.

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### **Chip Bell** Who's Your Daddy?

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

This verse causes people a lot of headaches because taken just by itself, it sounds like Jesus is setting a standard we cannot possibly attain.

But it's worth noting that this verse is related to the verses we've just been reading. The word perfect here means complete or thorough. Jesus is talking about the way we ought to love. Loving only our friends and our family is an incomplete love that any human being can do. But loving your enemy—loving those that hate you and those that hate God—that kind of love is mature and fully developed. And that's the kind of love that God has. So go the whole way in loving just as God does. Our love should be like God's love. We should follow our Father's example.

Conclusion - You know, evangelicals never will be clearly understood by the world. Sometimes even our love is interpreted as hate. For example no matter how kindly you speak the biblical truth that those without Christ will perish, many will still consider that to be "hate" speech. But despite those misunderstandings, it is also worth considering whether there is any truth to the claim that evangelicals express "hate" to other people in the world. Is there anything to it? It is worth examining ourselves inside and out to make sure that we identify anything hateful in our actions or our attitudes: impatience, unkindness, envy, boasting, pride, rudeness, self-assertion, anger, resentment, and gloating. Are we protecting, trusting, hoping and persevering? We comfort ourselves with the adage, "Hate the sin, but love the sinner." It allows us to justify some feeling of outrage against sin and unrighteousness. But when we express that outrage within earshot of the people we call "sinners", I don't believe that they can tell that we don't hate them. And I'm pretty sure that we're not acting the way love would act.

I have a friend whose son, in a moment of uncontrolled rage, murdered his girlfriend. If that was your son—thrown in jail, awaiting trial and certain punishment—how would you feel? How would you treat him? I think it's clear that we're all against murder here. But how would you feel about your son? How would you treat him? Would you stick a big sign in front of his face that says, "All murderers will burn forever in the fiery lake of sulfur. Rev 21:8"? Or would you weep with him? Would you stand by him and comfort



him, pleading with God to be merciful to him and not give him what he deserves?

The evangelical church longs to reveal God's justice

by hating those who oppose him.

But God longs for the church to reveal his love

for even those who oppose him.

You're an evangelical. How do you treat the people in this world who hate God, who reject his truth and live by their own behavioral standards?

Do you love them?

## TORREY'S TOPIC PERFECTION

- Is of God -Psalms 18:32; 138:8
- All saints have, in Christ -1 Corinthians 2:6; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 2:10
- God's perfection the standard of -Matthew 5:48

### IMPLIES

- Entire devotedness -Matthew 19:21
- Purity and holiness in speech -James 3:2
- Saints commanded to aim at -Genesis 17:1; Deuteronomy 18:13
- Saints claim not -Job 9:20; Philippians 3:12
- Saints follow after -Proverbs 4:18; Philippians 3:12
- Ministers appointed to lead saints to -Ephesians 4:12; Colossians 1:28
- Exhortation to -2 Corinthians 7:1; 13:11
- Impossibility of attaining to -2 Chronicles 6:36; Psalms 119:96

### THE WORD OF GOD IS

- The rule of -James 1:25
- Designed to lead us to -2 Timothy 3:16,17
- Charity is the bond of -Colossians 3:14
- Patience leads to -James 1:4
- Pray for -Hebrews 13:20,21; 1 Peter 5:10
- The Church shall attain to -John 17:23; Ephesians 4:13
- Blessedness of -Psalms 37:37; Proverbs 2:21

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**Robert Yarbrough** writes that the Bible calls for...

God's people are called to be perfect: "Be perfect ... as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). In Scripture nothing is clearer than the unique holiness of God, so this cannot be a command for sinners to become God's ethical equals. It is rather the call to "be imitators of God...as dearly beloved children" (Eph 5:1-note). Children who treasure their parents typically mimic them. Christians should mimic their Lord, Who is perfect, thus reflecting His perfection in their lives. For some this will involve voluntary impoverishment for the sake of gaining true riches: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Matt 19:21). For others it is not the pride of possessions but the pride of self-expression that must go: "If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check" (James 3:2).

While Paul calls on readers, not only to imitate God (Eph 5:1), but also to imitate him (1Cor 4:16; 11:1; 2Th 3:7), Paul denies that he is perfect (Php 3:12-note). Yet he calls believers to share in the derivative excellence that life in Christ bestows (Col 1:28note;

Col 3:14-note). Hebrews likewise speaks of the perfection of God's children, stressing that it is the result of Christ's death on their behalf: "by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Heb 10:14-note; cf. Heb 11:40-note; Heb 12:23-note).

A key New Testament verse for understanding perfection in the Christian life is 2Corinthians 12:9 (note): "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"

Believers are perfect to the extent that they participate in the cruciform grace that God offers in Christ. Christ was perfected through the travail of righteous living amid the bruising realities of an unjust world. The means and abiding symbol of the perfection He won is the cross. His followers know perfection as they abide in the bright shadow of this same sign.