

Be Perfect

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Introduction



2017 is gone. 2018 is here.



This is the time of the year when people
craft resolutions to better their lives.



As Christians, what are the possible resolutions to bring us closer to God?



I did some web checking and here are the top five (5) resolutions:

1. Read the Bible daily
2. Pray more often
3. Do some charity
4. Attend church more often
5. Drop bad habits



We can all agree that these are very nice and very meaningful New Year's resolutions. And, I believe we should all be doing more of these things.



If you ask Jesus what your life's resolution ought to be, what do you think would be Jesus' answer?



He would most probably tell you this:
“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly
Father is perfect.”



When a huge crowd gathered to hear Him speak, He openly told them “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48.



This passage is part of the famous Sermon on the Mount. “Be perfect,” is indeed a daunting and intimidating declaration of Jesus.



The clergymen and ministers will tell you
that it is a bad resolution because it is
impossible for man to attain perfection on
his own.



We are all sinners and no one is righteous.
Therefore, they say it is impractical, foolish
and absurd to strive for perfection on your
own.



They will tell you that perfection is not attainable, and it is not possible sinners like you and me.



Therefore, forget the notion and ignore what
Jesus said about “be perfect.”



There are two (2) ways to understand this verse. The 1st is the one we earlier discussed – forget about it, no one can do it.



And, the proper one, which all Christians should take it to mean is that we must strive for perfection.



Give this verse to any 10 year old child and he or she will tell you exactly the same thing; i.e., “plainly be perfect, no ifs and no buts.”



We propose that “Be Perfect” be the resolution for Christians this 2018. Our Christian resolve, mind set, goal and aim is to strive to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.



Today, we will answer four (4) questions:

1. Is there such a thing as perfection?
2. Is perfection an ideal or a goal?
3. Should Christians strive to be perfect?
4. How to strive for perfection?



**1. Is there such a thing as
perfection?**



To answer the question we must first know what the word perfect means. The word translated “perfect” in English comes from the Greek word “Teleios.”



This is the same word used for “be perfect” and “Heavenly Father is perfect.” “Teleios” means perfect, complete, mature, full-grown, lacking nothing; describing a consummate state of things – of character and virtue.



If I were to define the word “perfect,” I would go to the Bible and let the scripture define it for me.



Psalm 18:30 (NIV)

“As for God, his way is **perfect**: The LORD’s word is **flawless**; he shields all who take refuge in him.”



Therefore, to be perfect means to be without
fault, to be flawless.



Now, we know that there is a state of being “perfect.” Perfection is when one is flawless, having grown to full maturity, lacking nothing. As Paul said in Galatians 4:19 “... until Christ is formed in you.”



Perfection is not an abstraction. It is not a relative term or a figure of speech. It is an absolute; and the reason it is an absolute is because there is a specific standard. And, the standard of perfection is God.



Deuteronomy 32:4

He is the Rock, his works are **perfect**, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.



2 Samuel 22:31

As for God, his way is **perfect**: The LORD's word is **flawless**; he shields all who take refuge in him.



God is perfect. All His ways are perfect.
God alone defines the standard of
perfection. And, God's standard has a
basis – God's law.



Psalm 19:7

The **law of the LORD** is **perfect**, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.



God's law is perfect and upon which perfection is defined. Whether a man is considered perfect or not depends on how he responds to God's righteous laws.



James 1:25

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—
not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.



2. Is perfection an ideal or a goal?



It is this state of perfection that Jesus encourages us to arrive at.

Is it easy to attain perfection?

The answer is NO.



In fact, no one has ever attained perfection.

The scripture says in Romans 3:23 “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” It is for this reason that Jesus said:
strive to be perfect.



Many are convinced that they are sinners
and can do nothing good in their lives.
They think perfection is an abstract idea
and not a goal.



So, many do not even try to be perfect.
People just ignore the commandments of
God and rely on the grace of Christ to
make them perfect.



Mankind is created in the image and likeness of God. In the Garden of Eden, the first couple learned all the good things from God who walked in their midst. God called the creation very good. Sin has not yet entered the world.



Man was good. He wasn't evil or wicked.

But, Adam was not yet perfect. He needed to develop Godly character. The infusion of divine character into his being will eventually make him complete – complete as a son of God.



Our imperfection comes from sin because we have broken God's perfect law. It is for this reason that Christ came to die for our sins.



Once our sins are forgiven Paul admonishes that we should not continue sinning but rather start to live a life of godliness.



Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of
your mind. Then you will be able to test
and approve what God's will is—his good,
pleasing and **perfect** will.



If we live according to God's perfect will, we
will be perfect before His eyes!



3. Should Christians strive to be perfect?



What kind of perfection is God looking for in
His children?

The answer is perfect godly character.



Ezekiel records a being referencing to Satan



Ezekiel 28

11 The word of the LORD came to me:

12 “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “ ‘You were the **seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.**



Ezekiel 28

13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared.



Ezekiel 28

14 You were anointed as a **guardian cherub**, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.

15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.



Ezekiel 28

16 Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and **you sinned**.

So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.

17 Your heart became **proud** on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.



Ezekiel 28

18 By your **many sins and dishonest trade** you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching.



Ezekiel 28

19 All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’ ”



God looks for a perfect heart.



Psalm 51:17

“My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”



Christians are imitators of Christ. We should strive to be perfect in all our ways just like Christ is perfect. Our perfection reflects the image of Christ.



We strive to be like Christ each day
collectively as a church and individually as
a Christian.



Ephesians 4

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,

12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up



Ephesians 4

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature**, attaining to the **whole measure of the fullness of Christ**.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.



Ephesians 4

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to **become** in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, **Christ**.

16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.



Individually we are followers of Christ.



Ephesians 5

1 Follow **God's example**, therefore, as dearly loved children

2 and **walk in the way of love**, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.



The Christian duty is to reflect Christ in our lives. This includes character development.



Peter 1

13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.



Peter 1

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;

16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”



The exhortation is very clear. We have a duty and a responsibility to lead our lives towards righteousness, holiness, godliness and into perfection.



Our Christian calling is an active calling wherein we need to put our belief into action. This is what perfection is all about.



James 1:25

“But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—
not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”



4. How to strive for perfection?



Striving for perfection is never easy. No one has achieved it yet. But, it does not mean we should not seek to be perfect. We know from the scripture that we cannot live a life of debauchery and expect to be saved.



Galatians 5

19 “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”



We want to leave you three (3) principles on your journey towards becoming a more perfect Christian; they are:



1. Keep the Commandments



The law is God's standard of righteousness.
Without the law no one will know what sin
is.



Romans 7:7

What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful?

Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”



Romans 7:12

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.



Therefore, sin is the transgression of the law. A sinner is defined as someone who breaks God's laws.



1 John 3:4

“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact,
sin is lawlessness.”



For us to be right with God we need to keep
His commands.



John 14:15

“If you love me, **keep my commands.**”



John 5:3

And, further the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 5:3 “In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.”



Let us go through the 10 commandments
and tell us if it is really that difficult to keep
the commandments of God.



We may not be able to keep them 100% all the time, but it is not totally impossible to keep. We may from time to time miss the mark. But, it doesn't mean we cannot strive to keep them.



The 1st principle to be perfect before God is
to keep God's commandments.



2. Accompany your faith with works



How you live your life is important. Faith is lived. Christianity is a way of life. If you are faithful to Christ, you should manifest it in your daily actions.



James 2

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.



James 2

16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

17 In the same way, **faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**



James 2

18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.



James 2

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?



James 2

22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend.



James 2

24 You see that a person is **considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.**

25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without deeds is dead.**



The 2nd principle is to strengthen your faith with righteous deeds. If you say you love God, then you must keep yourself righteous and holy before God by keeping His commands.



3. Keep the Royal Law of Love



Keeping the commandments of God is good,
but not enough. The 10 commandments
are commandments of love.



The 1st four (4) commandments pertain to loving God and the succeeding six (6) commandments pertain to loving the neighbor.



When asked which of the 10 commandment is the greatest, Jesus responded with the outline of the commandments.



Matthew 22

36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’



Matthew 22

38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”



Without the first command you cannot have the second command. Without loving God you cannot love your neighbor.



James calls the command to love one another as the royal law. James 2:8 “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right.”



The 3rd principle is to exercise the
commandment in love.



This is where we are introduced to the
Sermon on the Mount.



In the Sermon of the Mount Jesus talks about the proper exercise of the law. The laws of God are laws of love.



Jesus did not magnify or expand the coverage of the law. Jesus explained the application and the real intent of the law.



Matthew 5



Matthew 5

- 1 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,
- 2 and he began to teach them. He said:



Matthew 5

3 “Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are **those who mourn**, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the **meek**, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they will be filled.



Matthew 5

7 Blessed are the **merciful**, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called children of God.

10 Blessed are **those who are persecuted because of righteousness**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



Matthew 5

11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



Salt and Light

The law was given to the Israelites for them to shine in the darkness of the world. Israel was supposed to be the model nation, the beacon of God's truth to the world. They failed to understand that. Now, that role belongs to the followers of Christ.



Matthew 5

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.



Matthew 5

15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.



The Fulfillment of the Law

Jesus here is teaching all His followers how to properly and effectively keep the commandments.



Matthew 5

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to **fulfill them**.

18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.



Matthew 5

19 Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.



Matthew 5

20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.



How does our righteousness surpass that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

The answer is exercising the law in love.



Murder (the 6th commandment)

21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’



The Pharisees and the teachers of the law think as long as you do not lay in wait to kill your brother or sister and you did not take the actual step to commit murder, you are okay in the sight of God.



Matthew 5

22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.



Jesus said, that is not the intent of the law.
The truth intent is not to hate your brother
and sister, rather to love them from the
heart and to forgive them and to reconcile
with them.



Matthew 5

23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.



Matthew 5

25 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.



To settle all disputes and misunderstanding
amicably with brotherly love.



Matthew 5

26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.



Adultery (7th Command)

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

Pharisees thought if they did do the act, they are okay.



Matthew 5

28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.



The true intent of the law is not to lust after other man's wife. If you love your neighbor, you should not even entertain such a thought.



Matthew 5

29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.



Matthew 5

31 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’

Some would justify divorcing the wife just to marry another.



Matthew 5

32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Jesus said, still you are committing adultery.



Oaths (8th command – bearing witness)

33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’



People make oaths lightly as long as they are not made to God. So, they are quick to swear and make oaths to one another.



Matthew 5

34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all:
either by heaven, for it is God's throne;

35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by
Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great
King.



Matthew 5

36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

Jesus said, do not take your oath lightly. You are making a testimony as a witness when you do. When you do such, you need to perform it.



Matthew 5

37 All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

The intent is to speak the truth in love.



Eye for Eye

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’

People think the law is a harsh exacting rule.
For every often there is an equal
punishment.



Matthew 5

39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.
If anyone slaps you on the right cheek,
turn to them the other cheek also.



The true intent of the law is accommodating, merciful, gracious and loving. The laws of God are not confrontational but peace-making.



Matthew 5

40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.

41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.



Love for Enemies

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’



This is the natural attitude of all people including the Pharisees and the teachers of the law in the application of the law. Thus, they lose compassion.



Jesus chastised them in Matthew 23:23

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin.

But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.



Matthew 5

44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.



Matthew 5

46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

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



For us to be perfect, we need to exercise the
law in love.



Summation



To close, here is an account worth telling.



Matthew 19

16 Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

This young man believed in Jesus; he came to Him. He had faith. The 1st principle.



Matthew 19

17 “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

Commandment keeping – the 2nd principle



Matthew 19

18 “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied,
“ ‘You shall not murder, you shall not
commit adultery, you shall not steal, you
shall not give false testimony,

19 honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love
your neighbor as yourself.’”

20 “All these I have kept,” the young man
said. “What do I still lack?”



Matthew 19

21 Jesus answered, “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.”

What the young man needs is to love his neighbor. Helping the poor and less fortunate.



Matthew 19

22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.



The exhortation of Jesus is for us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect.



Perfection is a goal, it is a journey. Even with our best intentions we will fall into sin from time to time.



We should strive for perfection – to be like Christ. Perfection, should be the direction of every Christian. When we strive each day to be perfect; one day, we will be!



James 1:4

“Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”



Faith + Commandment Keeping + Love =
Perfection



Therefore, be perfect, as your Heavenly
Father is perfect!



END

