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## You Must Be Perfect

Jesus covered a lot of territory in the "Sermon on the Mount," as recorded in the book of Matthew. One statement in particular can cause much concern. He said, "*You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" What do you think He meant by that?



First of all, let's look at it in context. At that point in the sermon He was talking about loving others. "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" (Matthew 5:43-48)

So we can say, for sure, that His words mean we are to love others the way God loves us — unselfishly and unconditionally. Of course, there's more to it than that. Jesus included many other instructions for our behavior in that magnificent sermon. "Be perfect" stands out as kind of a summary for all of them.

We don't have the original Aramaic words that Jesus spoke. What you and I have are one or more versions that have been translated into English from the original Greek Bible text. But let's take a good look

YOU  
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Perfect

at what we have, specifically these four words: **You must be perfect.** What do they mean for us today?

**You.** Jesus was addressing not just those who were listening to Him, but everyone who hears or reads His words, including you and me. We must be perfect.

**Must.** This is not a suggestion; it's a command. It's a requirement. We must be perfect. It is not optional.

**Be.** This doesn't mean, "become." It isn't just "pie in the sky by and by." God commands us to be perfect, right now.

**Perfect.** This has several meanings, all in this one word. To be perfect as our God is perfect means to be mature, complete, sinless, without any flaws. Perfect.

Wow. How do we deal with this? Let's begin by trying to understand its purpose.

"You must be perfect" is a command that we obviously cannot obey. Can I be perfect? No, I can't. Can you achieve perfection? No. You can't. No human being has ever been perfect, except one, Jesus, the man who is also God.

Why would God give us a command we cannot possibly obey? Because He wants us to realize that, even though we can't do it, He can. We can never earn our way into Heaven. We need to depend on Him to earn it for us.

And He has done it. In Jesus' words, spoken to Nicodemus: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*" (John 3:16-17)

Jesus said, "You must be perfect," then He added, in effect, "Here, let me help." He suffered horribly and died on the cross to make us perfect. When He said, "It is finished," He was referring, among other things, to the work of making human beings perfect.



Because of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, all of your sins are forgiven. All of my sins are forgiven. In God's sight you and I are as pure and innocent as if we had never done a sinful act or had a sinful thought. Thanks to Jesus, we are perfect.

There's a sign I have seen in offices or on desks that says, "Please be patient. God isn't finished with me yet." This is so true. By His death, Jesus did a finished work for you and me. But He only began the work that still needs to be done in us.

Consider this: *God our Savior ... desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 3-4)* Notice that there are two processes here. First, God wants all people to be saved — which is the work Jesus did on the cross. Salvation is freely available now to every person who will accept it. Then, secondly, God wants all people to come to know the truth. What truth? The truth that is the entire message of the Holy Scriptures — we were created to enter into an eternal love relationship with God. The whole Bible is God saying to us, "Come to me. Come, be my adopted child; come share in my joy forever!"

How do we come to know the truth? Jesus said, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" (John 14:6) "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things ... he will guide you into all the truth.*" (John 14:26,16:13) We come to the knowledge of the truth when we get to know Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is given to us to guide us to that knowledge.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)* To be "in Christ" is to be created brand new, without sins, perfect. Now, how do we stay that way? It's very simple — not easy, but simple. We put ourselves completely in God's hands. *I appeal to you ... present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)*

Think of a potter, taking a lump of clay into his hands, looking at it, feeling it, and saying, "This is just the clay that I want, it's perfect." The lump of clay is perfect for the purpose he intends for it. Then he goes to work, and with the energy of the wheel, the judicious application a little water, and the expert work

of his hands, the potter gradually changes that lump of clay into a the finished vessel that he intended it to be. Then he bakes it in an oven to make it durable.

What is the clay's part in this process? Very simply, the clay has to be obedient, and allow the potter, the wheel, and the oven do all that they do.

As with any analogy, this one is limited. But Paul's words are key: "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This is accomplished in us by the work of the Holy Spirit as we read and study God's word, listen to sound teaching, come near to God in prayer, strive to do God's will, and share in loving fellowship with other believers in Jesus.

As we grow in Christ, we become more like Him — "*we shall be like Him*", (1 John 3:2). And the evidence of this is the fruit of the Holy Spirit — *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)* — becoming more and more evident in our lives.

The transformation from unrepentant sinner to sinless saint is not quick, it's never easy, and it's also not painless. But it is worth the effort and whatever pain is involved. It is worth it to us, and it was and still is worth it to Jesus — He died not just to save us from Hell, but also to save us for Heaven. Heaven is the destiny God planned for us. It is ours, and it is free. It is up to us to let God get us ready for it. And as our hearts grow more in tune with God's plan for our lives, we'll know the joy of Heaven, in a small but wonderful way, even before we get there.



We need to say "yes" to God's invitation to be saved, His way, by Christ's death, and to be transformed into Christ's likeness, by following the Holy Spirit as He guides us into the truth. And I say to you, as Paul wrote, "*I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you [and me] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*" (Philippians 1:6)

Blessings, Peace, and Joy to us all —

*Brother Roland*

# HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED?

By Mary Carothers

Have you ever wondered why you are on the earth? In the so-called "Grand Scheme of Life" do you know what your role is? For many years I asked myself these questions, but never had any answers.

Then one day after some folks prayed for me, God started working in my life. He began to make Jesus a living reality to me. As I studied God's love letter to us – the Bible – God began to teach me that His eternal plan has always been to bring us to Himself through what Jesus did for us.

God wanted us to become His very own children, but we were separated from Him because of our sin. What could we do? We certainly couldn't earn our way into God's Family. We could never be good enough. We had no hope.

So, God sent Jesus to do what we could never do. He took away our sins. What wonderful, blessed words! With His blood, Jesus purchased us and gave us to God the Father as gifts. **Ephesians 1:18 tells us we are God's glorious inheritance. God actually delights in us. We are His special treasure.**

We are not here on earth because our parents decided they wanted a child. Neither are we here because they had an "oops." We are here because God decided long ago He wanted to have loving fellowship with us. When we accept the wonderful gift of salvation from Jesus, we actually become a dearly loved child of Almighty God. He has promised us that He will never, never, never leave or abandon us. He is closer to us than the very air we breathe.

If you are lonely or afraid of the future, I pray that you will be comforted by the truth of these words. You are not alone. You are being held in the mighty hand of your Heavenly Father. In John 10, Jesus was talking about being the Good Shepherd, and He gave us this wonderful promise in verses 27 through 30: ***My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.***

## GOD'S LOVE

We call it "MERCY" –  
it is GOD'S FORGIVING LOVE.

We call it "PROVIDENCE" –  
it is GOD'S CARING LOVE.

We call it "KINDNESS" –  
it is GOD'S UNDERSTANDING LOVE.

We call it  
"CHRISTS' SUFFERING AND DEATH" –  
it is GOD'S PROVEN LOVE.

We call it "HAPPINESS" –  
it is GOD'S ENCOURAGING LOVE.

We call it "THE WILL OF GOD" –  
it is GOD'S UNERRING LOVE.

We call it "HEAVEN" –  
it is GOD'S REWARDING LOVE.

We call it "ETERNITY" –  
it is GOD'S UNENDING LOVE.

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The "Good News Guide" is a monthly newsletter that is free, and freely available to anyone who wants it. I love to get a note saying, "Please put me on the mailing list." If you know of someone who wants it, let me know. For inmates I need first and last name, DOC number, usually their SID number, and address.

This newsletter is primarily for jail and prison inmates, but I love it when an inmate is released and still wants it. I just need your address. Keep telling me where you are, and I'll keep sending you the GNG.

If you have a question about Bible truth or the Christian life, I'll gladly share my thoughts with you, and maybe with readers of "Good News Guide." Write to me. **Note:** I do not have Bible studies or materials to send you.

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## We Must Be Perfect

Our Heavenly Father is perfect. Jesus has made us perfect in His sight, and the Holy Spirit is ready, willing, and able to take us the rest of the way. Enjoy the Puzzle.

**Puzzle:**

Q Z Y G H G O S V J L V P C P G Q D M R E S T C E F R E P T  
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 S S G U R T M U R F C H H U J I C N X D A D A T O B F V E C  
 O P L I E N Z U T U H X T G G U O G C Y Z N C R L F T X R I  
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 Z G S E L F C O N T R O L L E D G G T Q E Z T F B F P K U K  
 C B T B L N F Y Z I O H U N Y B D I N T S W L O Q X S K L U  
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 P W G G U I D I N G N N D N X F Y L L C W U S Q G E N T L E

**Words:**

**\* Our Perfect God**

ALL-POWERFUL  
 COMFORTING  
 ETERNAL  
 FAITHFUL  
 FORGIVING  
 GENEROUS  
 GENTLE  
 GIVING  
 GOOD  
 GUIDING  
 HEALING  
 HELPING

HOLY  
 INVITING  
 LOVING  
 MERCIFUL  
 OMNICIENT  
 PATIENT  
 RESTORING  
 STEADFAST  
 TRUSTWORTHY  
 UNCHANGING  
 UPLIFTING  
 WISE

**\* Us, Being Perfect**

AT PEACE  
 CONFIDENT  
 HONEST  
 HONORING GOD  
 HUMBLE  
 JOYFUL  
 JUSTIFIED  
 KIND  
 LOVING GOD  
 LOVING NEIGHBORS  
 OBEDIENT  
 PERFECT

PRAYERFUL  
 SANCTIFIED  
 SELF-CONTROLLED  
 SPIRIT-FILLED  
 TEACHABLE  
 TRANSFORMED  
 UNDERSTANDING  
 WELCOMING