

# Matthew 5:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

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Jesus sets the ultimate standard: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Greek: τέλειοι, 'perfect/complete/mature'). The word τέλειος suggests completeness or reaching intended purpose, not sinless perfection. The conjunction 'therefore' (οὖν) connects this command to the preceding teaching on enemy-love - perfection is demonstrated in comprehensive, indiscriminate love reflecting God's character. 'As your Father' establishes God's perfection as both standard and motivation. This command climaxes the righteousness surpassing Pharisees (5:20) by demanding complete conformity to divine character.

## Historical Context

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Jewish holiness codes called for separation (שׁוֹרֵק, 'holy/set apart'), but Jesus redefines holiness as active, inclusive love mirroring God's universal grace. Leviticus 19:2 commands 'Be holy, for I am holy' - Jesus parallels this with 'be perfect, for your Father is perfect.' Early Christian perfectionist movements (Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification, Holiness movement) wrestled with this verse's implications. The context suggests perfection in love, not absolute sinlessness in this life.

## Related Passages

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**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

### Study Questions

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1. How does understanding 'perfect' as 'complete' or 'mature' change our interpretation of this command?
2. In what ways does God's perfect, indiscriminate love challenge our selective compassion?
3. What role does grace play in the command to moral perfection we cannot achieve?

### Interlinear Text

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ἔσεσθε	οὖν	ὁμεῖς	τέλειός	ὥσπερ	τοῖς	πατὴρ	ὁμῶν
Be	therefore	ye	perfect	even	which	Father	as your
G2071	G3767	G5210	G5046	G5618	G3588	G3962	G5216

  

τοῖς	ἐν	τοῖς	οὐρανοῖς	τέλειός	ἐστιν
which	is in	which	heaven	perfect	is
G3588	G1722	G3588	G3772	G5046	G2076

### Additional Cross-References

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**James 1:4** (Parallel theme): But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

**Leviticus 19:2** (Parallel theme): Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.

**Deuteronomy 18:13** (Parallel theme): Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

**Luke 6:36** (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

**Colossians 1:28** (Parallel theme): Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

**1 John 3:3** (Parallel theme): And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

**2 Corinthians 7:1** (Parallel theme): Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

**Luke 6:40** (Parallel theme): The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

**Genesis 17:1** (Parallel theme): And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

**Matthew 5:16** (Parallel theme): Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.