

Perfection: The Divine Standard of Excellence

Table 1: A Brief, Inductive, (Bottom-Up--Let the Scriptures Speak), Approach to Understanding Matthew 5:48 and Genesis 17:1

Perfection is a state of life, (Philippians 2:15; Isaiah 60:1-2, & Hebrews 12:1), which the death, resurrection, and mediation of Jesus Christ make possible in believers, who are "being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom 15:16). Sanctification, as used here, means being made holy, pure, and clean during the process of being set-apart, by God, for sacred service (Psalm 4:3 & 1 Peter 2:9).

Some Christians celebrate Christmas and the Resurrection without specific Scriptural commands to do so. As far as they are concerned, Christ died and escaped the tomb, so the celebration is apropos. Why then do we see measured resistance to the explicit Scriptural call to perfection? The purpose of today's study is to encourage acceptance of God's plan, (Jer 29:11), for perfection! The table heading, shown below, provides the organizing framework for making the case for "...perfecti[on] of the saints..." (Ephesians 4:12).

	In This Present Life		At Christ's Appearing & the Hereafter
ID	Once Were	Becoming ("Press toward the mark for... the high calling of God in Christ" (Php 3:14))	
		Are (Newborn to Adolescent in Christ)	Will Be (Mature Adult in Christ)
			Forever Transformed into God's Likeness

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1	Born in Sin - Psalm 51:5 Before you were quickened, you "were dead in trespasses and sins" - Eph 2:1 & Col 2:13	In Christ = new creatures 2 Cor 5:17 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" - 1 John 1:9 "Some men's sins are... going before to judgment; ...[others] follow after" - 1 Timothy 5:24; <u>Acts 5:31</u> . In which group do you belong? The internal warfare is a good sign - Gal 5:17	Born of God does not sin - 1 John 3:9 "...No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ...The Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life" - <u>John 3:5-6</u> , NLT "My little children, ...sin not..." - 1 John 2:1	"This is our God; we have waited for Him" - Isa 25:9 "...Put on incorruption..." - 1 Cor 15:51-54
2	"The works of the flesh..., they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" - Gal 5:19-21 "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" - Rom 8:8	"You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit... if the Spirit of God dwell in you..." - Rom 8:9 "The law of the Spirit... makes you free" Rom 8:2 "I die daily" - 1 Cor 15:31 & <u>2 Cor 4:10-11</u> "I am crucified with Christ" - Gal 2:20 "Understanding what the will of the Lord is" - Eph 5:17; <u>Col 4:12</u> ; <u>2 Cor 13:11</u> ; <u>John 17:23</u> "...We are God's children..., but He has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears; but we know that we will be like Him. All who have this expectation will keep themselves pure..." - <u>1 John 3:1-3</u> , NLT	"No longer live the rest of [our] time in the flesh" - 1 Pet 4:2 "...If the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He... shall quicken your mortal bodies... [and you will] mortify the deeds of the body..." - Rom 8:10-14. Hence, the Scripture unapologetically says, "Put to death... the earthly desires at work in you" - Col 3:5, GNT. This work is NOT optional. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" - Luke 17:33	"The Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces..." - <u>Isa 25:8</u> & <u>Rev 21:4</u> , NKJV
3	Once "...walked according to the course of this world, ...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind..." - Eph 2:2-3 "...Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" - <u>2 Tim 3:4</u>	"Risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...; set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" - Col 3:1-2 "...Being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" - <u>Rom 5:10</u> "We have a High Priest..." - <u>Heb 4:15</u> , NKJV. "...Come boldly to the... throne of God and stay there to receive... grace to help us in our times of need" - <u>Heb 4:16</u> ; <u>8:1-2</u> , <u>6</u> , <u>8</u> , <u>10-11</u> , TLB.	"We have died to sin" - Rom 6:2; NLT "Now we live new lives" - Rom 6:4; NLT "Continue to live holy" - Rev 22:11, NLT "Old sinful selves were crucified... that sin might lose its power" - Rom 6:6, NLT "Perfected after suffering (1 Pet 5:10) "Come safely through terrible persecution... [with] robes made white" - Rev 7:14, GNT	"...[Stand] before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes" - Rev 7:9 Have God's "name written in forehead; ...[and] are without fault before the throne of God" - Rev 14:1-5

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4	"O wretched man that I am..." - Rom 7:24 & Rev 3:17	"Redeemed... from vain conversation" - 1 Pet 1:18 Have "...a future and a hope" - <u>Jer 29:11, NKJV</u> "Jesus Christ... [has] washed us from our sins... and made us... priests unto God" - Rev 1:5-6; 1 Pet 2:9. GNT says, "freed us from our sins..." "When we died with Christ we were set free from power of sin" - Rom 6:7, NLT "...Pure & pleasing to [God] by Holy Spirit" - <u>Rom 15:16; Luke 11:13; John 16:13; 4:24 & 14:17, TLB</u> "Be holy <u>AND</u> without blemish" Eph 5:27	"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" <u>Mark 1:11, NKJV</u> . How do we get there? "Have you considered My servant Job, ...a blameless and upright man..." - <u>Job 1:8 & 2:3, NKJV?</u> "Let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance" - Heb 6:1 "Let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" - James 1:4 "Being confident... that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" - Php 1:6, NKJV	"Priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" - Rev 20:6
5	"...Not endure sound doctrine, but... turn their ears away from the truth..." - 2 Tim 4:3-4, NKJV	"Gird up the loins of your mind... & hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:13) "You are complete in Him..." - Col 2:10, NKJV "Shepherd... make you perfect..." (Heb 13:20-21)	"Kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Pet 1:5). Kept from what and by whom? Kept from rebuke, crookedness, and perversion - <u>Php 2:15</u> by the Spirit of the Lord - <u>Isa 59:21 & Eze 36:27</u> "Everyone who conquers will inherit..." - <u>Rev 21:7, TLB</u>	"There is... the crown of righteousness, which the Lord... will give to me on that Day..." - 2 Tim 4:8, NKJV
6	"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and... trust in chariots, ...but... look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord" - Isa 31:1	"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" - John 1:29 "No condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus, who walk... after the Spirit" - Rom 8:1 "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me" - Psalm 138:8, NKJV "The righteousness of the law [is] fulfilled in us, who walk... after the Spirit" - Rom 8:4	"Everyone who is called by My name, I have created for My glory..." - <u>Isa 43:7, NKJV</u> "We all, with open face beholding... the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image..., even as by the Spirit of the Lord" 2 Cor 3:18 Christ "is able to keep you from falling, and to Present you faultless before the presence of His glory..." - Jude 1:24.	"[The] gates [of the New Jerusalem] shall NOT be shut at all... and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ...There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or cause an abomination or a lie..." - Rev 21:25-27, NKJV.

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Closing Arguments to the Jury of Your Mind: Members of the jury, with regards to the perfecting of the saints, we had **82** Scriptures for consideration. God placed within the Church gifts to support ministries by ministers in the capacities of "...apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. [God's ministers have the Scriptures for instructing the people of God in righteousness that they "...may be perfect..." (2 Tim 3:16-17). Hence, His ministers were appointed] for the PERFECTING of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine..." (Ephesians 4:11-14). In view of the evidence before this court, I ask you to return a verdict of guilty to the court of your mind. We have no valid reason for tolerating imperfection when we can be confident that God "who has begun a good work in [us] will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6, NKJV).

Recap & Summation of Main Perfection Themes

Focus Questions	Answers
1. In your own words, how do Hebrews 12:1 and Philippians 2:15 make the case for perfection?	
2. According to Peter, (1 Peter 4:1-2), what is the role of suffering in attaining perfection?	
3. According to Romans 8:11-12, by what means might humans live perfect lives?	
4. According to Colossians 3:5-6, what is the role of the human agent in securing perfection?	
5. According to Romans 8:1, how is the Christian to rise above condemnation?	
6. According to Colossians 3:1 & Romans 6:4, what awareness helps us go onto perfection?	
7. According to Romans 6:6-7, what advantage did Jesus Christ have over us in living a life of perfect obedience to God?	
8. Has anyone ever lived a perfect life (Job 1:8)?	
9. What assurances did Peter, (1 Peter 5:10), and Paul, (Colossians 2:10 & Hebrews 13:21) give regarding attainment of perfection?	
10. According to Matthew 5:48 & Psalm 138:8, what reason do I have to believe that I can be perfect?	
11. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, what is the role of the Scriptures in our pursuit of perfection?	
12. According to Revelation 21:26-27, why is it important to remind the people of God about perfection?	
13. What specific take-home message/s did you get from this study on perfection?	
14. What changes, if any, occurred in your understanding of God's call for the perfection of believers?	
15. Are there any unresolved concerns that this study should address before closure?	