

Blessed are the Perfect

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ... For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven ...

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Matthew 5:3, 6, 10, 48

Key Word: “perfect” (Greek: *teleios*)

(*teleios* from *télos* = goal, purpose)

Describes one who realizes an end or intended goal (*telos*). “Having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect” (Gingrich). Pertaining to being fully developed (BDAG). “Having reached its end, finished, complete; ... of persons, absolute, complete, accomplished, perfect in his or its kind” (LJS).

Application Questions

1. When Jesus said we are to be perfect as God is perfect, did He mean we are to be sinless? How does your conclusion comport with the implications of 6:12, 14-15; 7:3, and 7:11? What is the closest suggested approximation to this statement from the Old Testament (see Leviticus 19:2; 20:26)?
2. Some in church history have taught that in this cursed and fallen world it is possible for Christians to attain absolute sinlessness. Was this Jesus’ purpose in this text? How does your answer fit with Romans 8:19-25?
3. What were the three aspects of perfection identified in the sermon and how do they apply to our daily lives?
 - a. **Perfection as** _____.
(Job 25:4; Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; Psalm 130:3; 143:2; Ecclesiastes 7:20; James 3:2; Isaiah 53:6; 64:6; Romans 3:10, 23; Ephesians 2:1; Titus 3:3; and 1 John 1:8, 10)
 - b. **Perfection as** _____.
(Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Kings 8:61; James 1:4; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Peter 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Colossians 1:28; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Philippians 2:14-15; Ephesians 5:1; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Philippians 3:12-13)
 - c. **Perfection as** _____.
(Matthew 5:8, 9; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 2:9; John 17:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; 1 Peter 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3)
4. What was recommended as an important test of interpretation, and then applied to this verse? Clue: “*Does it make ... ?*”
5. Does “perfectionism”—as promoted by Pelagius and the pietists—tend to increase or decrease the sinfulness of sin? Does perfectionism make much of Christ?

6. Discuss how do each of the three aspects listed above make much of Christ:
 - a. **Justification:** we realize that God is holy and absolutely righteous and can have no fellowship with the unrighteous (Habakkuk 1:13; Isaiah 59:2; 2 Corinthians 6:14). Christ alone makes us perfectly righteous in the sight of God, we are justified by faith alone, in Christ alone (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:3-6).
 - b. **Sanctification:** salvation by grace alone is in perfect harmony with living to the glory of God alone. God cannot make something less than Himself as the goal and standard of our living. If God gave us a less than perfect standard, He would no longer be perfect. We make much of the goal that we strive after. If God is our goal, then we will make much of Christ (see references listed above under 3.b).
 - c. **Glorification:** Christ is the perfect image of God and all redeemed by Him will be made like Him when we see Him. There is a promise implied in Matthew 5:48. The sets our hope on fellowship with Christ in His own likeness, because of God's triune work in us. In this aspect, the hope of reaching the goal makes much of Christ who is the Author and Perfector of our faith, Himself being the goal (Hebrews 12:2; Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; Jude 24).
7. The greater righteousness of verse 20 is here revealed as what? Does the concept have more to do with a *degree* or a *kind* of righteousness?
8. Reflect on how our relationship to God defines our relationships with others (see especially 5:43-48). How does this section of the Sermon on the Mount take us back to the beginning—to the Beatitudes?
9. "Your heavenly Father" assumes that you are a child of God, by heavenly (new) birth, and are therefore distinct from His enemies (see 5:44-45). Your sonship is the basis of calling you to conform to the image of God—to be perfect, holy. So perfection is not the way to sonship, but sonship the way to perfection. After all, the disciples in 7:11 are described as "you then, who are evil" and immediately following identified as children of God ("your Father who is in heaven"). Discuss how this principle changes everything. What are the two primary ways God motivates us to strive for holiness?
10. How can we think of perfection as good news? Why was the title given "Blessed are the Perfect"?

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. [Setting (5:1-2)]
- B. Beatitudes – Identity and Assurance (5:3-12)
 - 1. Relating to God (5:3-6)
 - 2. Relating to People (5:7-12)
- C. Salt and Light – Witness to the world (5:13-16)

II. BODY

- A. *Thesis: Righteousness* (5:17 – 5:48)
 - 1. *Key: Exceeding Righteousness* (5:17-20)
 - 2. Obedience to the Law (5:21 – 5:48)
 - a. Anger (5:21-26)
 - b. Lust (5:27-30)
 - c. Divorce (5:31-32)
 - d. Dishonesty (5:33-37)
 - e. Retaliation (5:38-42)
 - f. Hatred (5:43-47)
 - 3. *Summary: Be Perfect* (5:48)
- B. *Thesis: Religion* (6:1-18)
 - 1. *Key: Avoid Hypocrisy* (6:1)
 - 2. Almsgiving (6:2-4)
 - 3. Prayer (6:5-15)
 - 4. Fasting (6:16-18)
- C. *Thesis: Values* (6:19-34)
 - 1. *Key: Heart Affections* (6:21)
 - 2. Two Treasures (6:19-20)
 - 3. Two Eyes (6:22-23)
 - 4. Two Masters (6:24)
 - 5. Two Pursuits (6:25-34)
- D. *Thesis: Relationships* (7:1-12)
 - 1. Relating to Brothers (7:1-5)
 - 2. Relating to Dogs and Pigs (7:6)
 - 3. Relating to the Father (7:7-11)
 - 4. *Summary: Golden Rule* (7:12)

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Call to Action (7:13-27)
 - 1. Two Gates and Ways (7:13-14)
 - 2. Two Trees and Fruits (7:15-20)
 - 3. Two Words and Wills (7:21-23)
 - 4. Two Hearers and Builders (7:24-27)

[Response (7:28-29)]