

## Be Perfect

Joe Slater

*“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48). So said Jesus to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount. Countless preachers, teachers, writers, and others have abused that beautiful text by using it as a club to beat us over the head, send us on a guilt trip, and make us feel hopeless because our behavior isn’t flawless. Shame on the entire lot of them!

Words like perfect, perfectly, perfection, et. al., are used 57 times in the KJV New Testament. They **never** refer to flawless behavior – not even once!

Well, if Jesus wasn’t commanding flawless behavior in Matthew 5:48, then what was His point? As usual, the truth is discovered by looking at the context. That 48<sup>th</sup> verse isn’t a stand-alone statement! It concludes a section that begins in verse 43 as Jesus contrasts the Jews’ defective view of love with the complete love of God. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies . . .”* (5:43-44a).

Then Jesus shows how God loves not only His friends, but His enemies; He blesses both good and evil with sunshine and rain (v. 45). Real sons of God will love as God loves, not merely loving those who love them, but their enemies also. Loving only friends is a partial love at best; loving both friends and enemies is a complete (“perfect”) love that mirrors God’s love for all.

Misinterpreting “be perfect” in Matthew 5:48 to mean “behave flawlessly” is proof-texting of the worst kind! By contrast, Paul exhorted Timothy to *“handle aright the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15, ASV). May God help us to do just exactly that!

## Plane Pitiful Parenting

While waiting to board a flight recently, I had the unfortunate experience of witnessing firsthand some lousy parenting. One mom of a 10-year-old boy told him to do something. He ignored her. So, she begged him to do it. He smarted off at her. She pleaded one more time. He shouted, “No!” She sulked, “Ok, I’ll just do it myself.”

Not 10 minutes later, a father had a similar exchange with a 7-year-old son. That son ran away full speed down the concourse.

Parents, God gave you the job of being PARENTS! *“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”* (Deuteronomy 6:7-7). *“Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4).

It’s not an easy job, but it’s the ticket that you bought. You need to make the rules, enforce the rules, and enact consequences when the rules are violated. Your kids may not be on board with that, but your responsibility is to fly them toward heaven and do your best to arrive there together. *“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is His reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them”* (Psalm 127:3-5).

For the rest of us, is it possible that we might look like those airport boys in the eyes of our Father in heaven when we are not following His flight plan? Do we obey our Father? *“This is right”* (Ephesians 6:1)!

David Sproule (Palm Beach Lakes, FL) adapted

## Keeping the Temple Clean

Most of us have seen the words “Wash Me” written on the back of a dust covered vehicle. Whether the authors of such messages are being well-meaning or just being mischievous is unknown, however, the fact remains that the car or truck is dirty and needs to be cleaned.

We can make a simple analogy between the dirty car and the Christian’s spiritual presentation. When it comes to being spiritually dirty, the bible says, *“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6:11). Having been washed by the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5) we are now a shining temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). But as with any building or vessel, there is always the opportunity for it to become dirty, and inevitably it does.

When it comes to keeping the temple clean, 2 Corinthians 6:16- 18 says, *“For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”*

Just as it is our individual responsibility to keep our vehicles clean, it is of the utmost importance to keep ourselves, the temple of God, *“unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27).

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

*Time is the only currency you can spend without knowing your balance. Use it wisely.*