

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

by Allon Maxwell

The doctrine of Christian perfection is a part of the Abrahamic Faith. God said to Abraham:

"Walk before me and be perfect." [Genesis 17:1](#)

"Perfection" was a condition of the covenant. (verse 2)

The Hebrew word translated "perfect" here, is "**tamin**".

In other places it is translated:

"perfect" 14 times

"upright" 8 times

"without spot" 6 times

"undefiled" 1 time ([Psalm 119:1](#))

"without blemish" 44 times

It is the word used to describe the sacrificial lamb which was required to be "without blemish", to represent the sinlessness of Jesus.

Significant uses of the word are found in:

[Leviticus 22:21](#)

[Psalm 18:23](#) (note verse 23)

[Deuteronomy 18:13](#)

[Psalm 19:7](#)

[Deuteronomy 32:4](#)

[Psalm 101:2](#)

[2 Samuel 22:31 & 33](#)

[Proverbs 2:21](#)

Modern translations often use the words "blameless" or "upright".

However, these alternatives do not reduce the meaning of the word at all. When we read the scripture quoted above, it is obvious that the standard of "perfection", or "blamelessness", or "uprightness" intended is measured in terms of God's own character, as revealed to us by Jesus.

This high standard of "perfection" is implicit in what Jesus calls the greatest commandment of all:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#))

Although human thinking tends to shrink from that as "too hard", God says that it is not!
[Deuteronomy 30:11-14](#)

God's commandment is NOT TOO DIFFICULT. (see RSV, NEB, NASB)
[Deuteronomy 30:16](#)

Obedience is joined with love. [Deuteronomy 30:6](#)

God even offers to change His people's hearts so that they will love.
[Deuteronomy 30:1-3](#)

This promise is conditional on repentance. God will have compassion, lift the curse, and restore the blessing when His people return to obedience.

THESE PROMISES ARE, IN EFFECT, THE GOSPEL OF BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

THEY ARE AT THE HEART OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS.

Mark 1:15 Repent and believe the Gospel.

Luke 24:47 Repentance and forgiveness are joined.

Matt 28:19-20 Disciples are to be taught to obey all that Jesus commands.

John 14:15, 21, 23 If you love me keep my commandments.

John 15:10 If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love.

John 3:36 He who does not obey the Son shall not see life.

John 8:31 If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples.

James 1:22 Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.

For those who doubt their own capacity, the GOOD NEWS contains the same promise as in the old testament - that God Himself will change the hearts of his children, so that they will love.

Luke 7:47 Forgiveness and reciprocated love go hand in hand.

1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us.

Romans 5:5 Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22 Love is a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

So, Jesus said to His disciples (just as His Father said to Abraham):

"Be therefore perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect". Matthew 5:48

The New Testament Greek word for "perfect" is "**teleios**". It is very similar to the Old Testament word discussed above. It means "complete", "entire", "fully developed".

We are left in no doubt as to its meaning.

Matthew 5:48 It is measured by God's own perfection.

Ephesians 4:13 It is measured by the full stature of Christ.

Other significant uses are found in:

John 17:23	Hebrews 2:10	James 1:4	Romans 12:2
Hebrews 5:9	1 John 2:5	Philippians 3:12	Hebrews 6:1
1 John 4:12	Colossians 1:28	Hebrews 12:23	1 John 4:17-18
Colossians 4:12			

Many Christians dismiss "perfection" as "impossible", or "legalism", or even "heresy"! However, any honest assessment of the Gospels will make it plain that Jesus does mean us to take him at His word about this subject:

Luke 6:46 Why call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things I say.

Matthew 7:21 The Kingdom of Heaven is for those who do the will of the Father.

1 John 5:1-3 It is not too hard for the one who loves.

1 Corinthians 10:13 God guarantees that temptation will never be more than we can bear.

The commandment to be perfect is not to be measured in terms of ordinary human ability to keep it.

It is to be measured in terms of God's ability to TEACH us and ENABLE us to keep it.

[Ephesians 3:14-21](#) is a promise that the strength given us by the Holy Spirit, and our faith in Christ, and our experience of the love of Christ, will end in our being filled with all the fullness of God.....far more abundantly than we can ask or think.

A ripe understanding and experience of the Holy Spirit depends on our commitment to the goal of obedience.

"The Holy Spirit is given to them that obey." [Acts 5:32](#), [John 14:15-17](#).

GOD'S PROMISES

[Jude verses 24-25](#) God is able to keep us from falling.

[Romans 8:26](#) The Spirit helps us in our weakness.

[Romans 8:28-30](#) In everything God works for good with those who love Him and will complete His work in those He has called.

[Romans 8:38-39](#) Nothing in all creation can separate God's children from His love.

THIS DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IS NOT LEGALISM.

It is founded in love.....and love obeys. Those who do not obey Jesus do not love Him either! [John 14:24](#)

NEITHER IS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION ABOUT SALVATION BY WORKS.

It is founded in real faith.....obedient faith.....faith which believes that the only life worth living is life in obedience to Jesus.

Abraham's faith was perfected by works! Faith that does not produce works is a dead faith.....it is not faith at all. [James 2:20-26](#)

This commitment to the goal of perfection leads to true assurance of our Sonship.

[Romans 8:14](#) To be led by the Spirit (which is to obey) is to be a son of God.

[1 John 4:15-18](#) The love that is perfected (in obedience) has confidence in the day of judgement.

[1 John 5:1-5](#) Sons of God who love Him and obey His commandments have faith to overcome.

[2 Timothy 4:6-8](#) Paul is an inspiring example of the confidence we are meant to have.

The Gospel is not just about forgiveness of sin.

It is also the GOOD NEWS about a faith and a love which enables us to forsake sin and learn to experience true holiness (without which no man shall see the Lord.)

[\(Hebrews 12:14\)](#)