

Jesus present's a new challenge of Spiritual Excellence to His Disciples/followers/Church.

Concord Community Church

Dated: 03/09/2023

Matthew 5:48 "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (NIV).

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we turn our attention to a profound and challenging verse from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5, verse 48. In this verse, Jesus presents us with a call to perfection – a standard that might seem unattainable, but holds within it a deep message of transformation and grace. Let us explore Matthew 5:48 and discover the wisdom it offers for our spiritual journey.

I. The Command to Be Perfect: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48, NIV)

A. Understanding the Context: In the preceding verses, Jesus is addressing the crowd in what is famously known as the Sermon on the Mount. He is expounding upon a higher moral law that surpasses the mere external observance of the commandments. Jesus emphasizes the importance of love, compassion, and forgiveness, challenging His disciples to rise above conventional norms and become true reflections of God's character and to become more like HIM. The context of the preceding verses in Matt 5:43–47, reflects God's goal for His people stated in Leviticus 19:2 and 19:18. When believers love their enemies, they show themselves to be "sons of your Father in heaven," that is, proper representation of God their Father (V45a). Those who love their enemies who hate & persecute them, show the most mature & complete love. The same love that God has for all people without discriminating between those who are good and those who are evil (V45b).

B. Defining Perfection: When Jesus commands us to be perfect, He isn't referring to flawless execution of tasks, but rather to the maturity and completeness of our love and character. This concept of perfection is better understood as "maturity" or "wholeness" in the original Greek (teleios. Teh'-lay-os meaning perfect). It's about being fully developed in our love for God and others, striving to embody the qualities of our heavenly Father.

II. Emulating Our Heavenly Father's Perfection:

A. Reflecting His Character: Our heavenly Father is perfect in His love, mercy, holiness, and righteousness. As His children, we are called to reflect these attributes in our lives. Just as a child imitates their parent's mannerisms, we are called to imitate the character of God in our daily interactions.

B. Loving the Unlovable: One of the most remarkable ways we can emulate God's perfection is by extending love even to those who may seem unlovable. Jesus Himself exemplified this when He forgave His executioners from the cross. When we choose to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, we showcase a love that transcends human norms and mirrors God's all-encompassing love.

III. The Transformative Power of Grace:

A. Recognizing Our Inability: The call to be perfect can be overwhelming if we rely solely on our own efforts. It's important to acknowledge that in our human nature, we are prone to imperfections and mistakes. This is where the transformative power of God's grace comes into play.

B. God's Grace and Our Effort: God doesn't call us to perfection without providing the means to achieve it. It's a partnership between our willingness to yield to His transforming grace and His empowering presence that works within us. Through prayer, studying His Word, and relying on the Holy Spirit, we can grow in our capacity to love and exhibit the characteristics of our heavenly Father.

Conclusion: As we reflect on Matthew 5:48, let us remember that the call to perfection is not meant to discourage us, but to inspire us toward a life of continuous growth and transformation. Jesus desires us to mature in love and character, to be instruments of His grace and vessels of His love in a broken world. Let us embrace the challenge of becoming perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, knowing that through His grace, we are being shaped into His image day by day. Remember, there is no expectation of sinless perfection in the New Testament (cf. Matt6:12 & 1-John1:8). Instead, we see the possibility of progressive maturity or holiness (eg., 2-Cor 7:1; Heb10:14). Love & forgiveness forms a perfect or mature character with the final goal of complete Christlikeness (Rom8:29 & Eph 4:15-16).