**Who is to be a perfect man?**

*Ephesians 4:11-16*

**Introduction**

1. Christ ascended to heaven in victory to receive a kingdom **(cf. Daniel 7:13-14).**
2. When He ascended, He ***“gave gifts to men” (Ephesians 4:7-8)***, i.e. to those who would be the citizens in His kingdom.
3. These gifts are listed specifically in **v. 11** – some inspired men, others not necessarily, and generally uninspired, but directed by an understanding of God’s word.
4. These ***“gifts”*** given by Christ would work toward the maintaining of unity **(v. 3, 13),** as the body is edified.
5. This unity would be achieved as members reached the description given, ***“to a perfect man,”*** as they are edified through the functioning of such gifts.
6. **Who is to be a perfect man? Is it simply those who bear the title of these gifts (v. 11)? Is it simply a portion of the body, as opposed to each member individually?**
7. **What does it mean to be “a perfect man?”**
8. The Call to Perfection
9. The Concept (“perfect man”)
   1. **Perfect** – *teleios*; brought to its end (goal); wanting nothing necessary to completeness (Strong)
      1. ***“mature manhood” (ESV); “mature man” (NASB).***
      2. “The faithful man shall be ‘perfect,’ that is, aiming by the grace of God to be fully furnished and firmly established in the knowledge and practice of the things of God; not a babe in Christ to the end, ‘not always employed in the elements, and infant propositions and practices of religion, but doing noble actions, well skilled in the deepest mysteries of faith and holiness.’” (R.C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament)
      3. “The τέλειος (“perfect man”) is one who has attained his moral end, that for which he was intended, namely, to be a man in Christ; however it may be true that, having reached this, other and higher ends will open out before him, to have Christ formed in him more and more.” (ibid.)
      4. **Contrast between infancy/childhood and adulthood/manhood** – When one is full grown in the physical sense, all their faculties are developed, and there is nothing lacking in their growth. (**Spiritually, there is always room for growth/improvement, but there is a point where one can, and should be described as “perfect,” or *teleios.***)
   2. **“Perfect,” teleios, in scripture:**
      1. **In regard to devotion to God’s law** – **Matthew 5:48** – called by Jesus to perfection. How?
         1. **(vv. 43-47)** – Love for everyone, even enemies.
            1. **Sense of incompletion in regard to love** – **vv. 46-47** – only loving those who everyone has love for.
            2. **Completion, or totality in love for others, like God** – **vv. 44-45** – Loves all men, as should we, even enemies.
            3. **V. 48** – Perfect, not in flawlessness (**cf. vv. 3-4; 6:12** – sin), but in completion, or maturity of development in regard to love.
         2. **Not simply with regard to love however:**
            1. **(vv. 19-20)** – The importance of striving to keep every bit of God’s law, or observe it completely.

**Pharisees and scribes** – majored in minors, and minored in majors; tradition which made null and void commands of God; hypocrites who spoke, but did not do.

**Don’t be “imperfect” or incomplete in regard to the law as are they.**

* + - * 1. **(cf. vv. 21-26)** – Don’t murder? DON’T BE ANGRY WITHOUT CAUSE – begins in heart.
        2. **(cf. vv. 27-30)** – Don’t commit adultery? DON’T LUST – begins in heart.
        3. **(cf. vv. 31-32)** – Give divorce certificate? DON’T DIVORCE – marriage for life w/ one exception.
        4. **(cf. vv. 33-37)** – Don’t swear falsely? DON’T SWEAR AT ALL – just tell the truth.
        5. **(cf. vv. 38-42)** – Revenge? OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.
        6. **(cf. vv. 43-48)** – Love only neighbor, but hate enemy? LOVE ALL – just as God does.
        7. **“Perfect,” or complete, or maturity in regard to the adherence to, and transformation by God’s law. (Not just some, but all.)**
    1. **In regard to enduring faith under trials** – **James 1:2-4** – perfect and complete through trials.
       1. **Various trials** – various in nature (*tribulation, persecution, temptation, etc.*), various in time and volume (*happens throughout discipleship*).
       2. **Tests faith** – **cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7** – to be found genuine.
       3. **Produces patience** – endurance, to further withstand successive tests of faith.
       4. **Let “patience” have its complete work – don’t cut it short from producing the character God intends for it to produce.**
       5. **(v. 4b)** – perfect and complete lacking nothing.
          1. In regard to the withstanding of trials.
          2. **You lack nothing, you are perfect/complete in regard to what it takes to withstand such tests.**
          3. **NOTE: Where a babe in Christ might be more likely to stumble in a testing situation, one who has endured “various trials,” and has had their character developed by such, is complete to overcome such trials and endure.**
          4. Such testing perfects you, or brings you to completion, or maturity – **cf. Hebrews 12:10-11** – by God’s design, to bring you to holiness, to produce fruits of righteousness.
    2. **In regard to knowledge of God’s word** – **Hebrews 5:13-14** – Solid food belongs to those of ***“full age.”***
       1. ***“Full age”*** – *teleios* – perfect, complete, mature, mature manhood.
       2. **(v. 13)** – The deeper concepts of scripture are not able to be digested by the immature.
       3. **(v. 14)** – All immature ones are to grow toward maturity, as they study, and thus exercise their spiritual senses to the point of discernibility between “good and evil.” (Nothing which they are incapable of knowing whether it is good or bad in doctrine or morality.)

1. The Need
   1. **Ephesians 4:12, 15-16** – To be a solid contributor to the edification of the body of Christ.
      1. There will always be babes in Christ **– but babes are always to grow to maturity.**
      2. When one becomes ***“a perfect man,”*** they are then able to aid in perfecting others in the same.
      3. **If nobody pressed on to perfection/completion/manhood, there would be a deficiency in edification of the body.**
   2. **Ephesians 4:14** – to leave childhood, lest you be led astray in error.
      1. There will always be false doctrine, and deceitful ways which are propagated.
      2. **Christians must reach the point where, in their own knowledge of God’s word, will be firm in the truth.**
      3. **Can’t always rely on others, but must be established in God’s word yourself.**
2. The Standard
   1. **Ephesians 4:13, 15** – The ***“measure,”*** or standard, is Christ.
      1. Christ is the one that we are to be imitating.
      2. ***“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).***
   2. **2 Peter 1:2-4** – Such is striving for maturity, or to become like the ***“divine nature,”*** or like Christ.
   3. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – Scripture, which is the word of Christ, thoroughly equips us in this journey.
   4. This is what Paul meant when he said, ***“it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).***
   5. ***Requires constant introspection and improvement – “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5).***
3. The Subjects of the Call
4. Anyone Exempt?
   1. **Only older Christians are expected to be mature, and maturing?**
      1. Younger generations look to the older generations and rely upon them to be mature, only to neglect reaching maturity themselves.
      2. Some, because of their relatively young age, do not think they are expected to reach maturity, like they know their parents and grandparents are supposed to.
      3. **What does God say about the younger generations, and maturity?**
         1. **Psalm 119:9-16** – The young are supposed to remain clean, and grow closer to God – note: ***“All the judgements” (v. 13)*** – reaching a state of complete knowledge.
         2. **1 Timothy 4:12-16** – Timothy was a youth, and was expected to reach maturity, and display his maturity.
            1. Younger Christians are to study.
            2. Younger Christians are to mature.
      4. **Some think they can’t be strong like their parents, or grandparents, or others they look up to.**
         1. **Think: Were they always this strong?** (Maybe since you remember, but they were babes in Christ at one point in time.)
         2. **Think: Do you think they never had struggles spiritually?** (That is part of their growth. Overcoming trials and temptations, always striving to better themselves before God!)
   2. **Not all will reach maturity, and God does not expect all to reach maturity?**
      1. Some act as though God does not expect them to mature. That they don’t have to mature. That God will be pleased with them as they are, and He does not absolutely desire their maturity.
      2. **Philippians 1:6** – God is working in us to bring us to completion.
      3. **Philippians 2:12-13** – This requires our compliance – we work, and God works in us.
      4. **Jude 20-21, 24** – It is in this way that God will present us blameless – bringing us to a ***“perfect man”*** through the gospel.
      5. **IT IS GOD’S WILL THAT YOU REACH SPIRITUAL MATURITY, AND TO NEGLECT SUCH IS TO REJECT GOD’S WILL FOR YOU.**
   3. **God said He gave “some” to be teachers, so I should never be expected to teach?**
      1. Some think they should never have to reach the maturity to teach, because God said He gave “some” to be teachers.
      2. ***NOTE: There is a legitimacy to God given talent in teaching. That is not what we are considering.***
      3. **Ability to teach is a product of maturity:**
         1. **Cf. Hebrews 5:12-14** – Speaking to Christians, not simply those “called” to teach.
            1. There were Christians who, after some time, should have reached the point of being able to teach.
            2. **They neglected their growth, thus, could not teach.**
         2. **Conclusion: If a Christian is mature, they ARE ABLE TO TEACH.** (*At some level – i.e. they have something to impart to those who are at a lesser level of maturity*.)
         3. **IMPLICATION: If one is able to teach, being a mature Christian, and an opportunity and/or need arises to do so, such should not be neglected!**
      4. **All Christians should reach the point where they are mature enough to teach others. (**There may be differences in ability/skill in teaching, but there should still be knowledge to impart to others, and the willingness to do so.)
5. ALL – EVERY JOINT – EVERY PART
   1. **NONE are exempt from this call to grow into a *“perfect man.”***
   2. **Cf. Ephesians 4:13, 16** – ***“we all,” “every joint”*** – this is a matter of each individual member working on, and reaching maturity, which in turn serves to edify the entire body.
   3. **GOD EXPECTS ALL TO MATURE, REACHING THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.**
   4. **Cf. Romans 8:29 – All Christians are *“predestined”* according to God’s plan to be conformed to Christ – He is the standard for all.**

**Conclusion**

1. God is not pleased with a lax approach to Christianity.
2. He wants us to reach completion, or maturity in Christ.
3. We are all required to work on this daily, giving ourselves wholly to the service of Christ!