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“YOU HAVE NOT SO LEARNED CHRIST”

By David Weeks

The Lord calls on His disciples to be "perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Peter said, "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15-16). We are to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1). Paul said that the apostles warned every man and taught every man in order to present them "perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28). Even Paul's helpers, such as Epaphras, labored fervently so that the saints might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12).

If you study Bible words, then you know the Greek word "teleios" (perfect) does not mean sinless, but refers to maturity of character, spiritual completeness, and the full-grown nature of one's moral standards. Thayer says that it means to be a "full-grown man" and to be of "full age, mature" relative to morals and spiritual growth.

So, what the Lord and the apostles were calling on Christians to be is mature, complete, and fully grown-up regarding the attributes and qualities that make one a disciple of Christ and a follower of God. Paul said we must "quit ye like men" (1 Corinthians 16:13). Jesus Christ is our standard. He set the example and "bar" that all disciples must meet. God established His Son as our savior, but also as our example. Those who believe in Jesus must follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21).

People like to say they just "can't live up" to the Lord's example, but the Bible provides overwhelming evidence that we can do so. Again, we are not talking about sinlessness, but spiritual maturity. That we can do! That we MUST do!

To behave in a way that does not mirror the Lord's example is to rebel against our mandate from the Lord. Nothing that the Lord requires of His people is impossible for them. When the scriptures command us to give, then we will have all sufficiency to do so (2 Corinthians 9:8). When the word commands us to resist the devil, we can do that too (James 4:7).

In matters of temptation and sin, nothing that we face is uncommon to man. God will supply us with the strength to escape it (1 Corinthians 10:13). To avow otherwise is nothing short of an absence of faith. Every protestation that "I am who I am," rather than who I should be, is weak faith in action. A believer cannot afford to embrace his short-comings as insurmountable, while hoping that God will save him in spite of his flaws. No, the "full-grown" man of God is a Christian's goal.

One who calls himself a Christian should behave as Christ would have him behave. Paul knew he had not yet attained the maturity he strove for, so he pressed on toward that upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12). He did not give up and wallow in faithlessness, he buffeted his body daily in order to achieve mastery of himself (1 Corinthians 9:25, 27). So must every disciple!

Twelve Steps to Spiritual Freedom and Growth

Shawn Bain

1. **Recognition that God should be first** (Matthew 6:33). God will not have us place someone or something else before Him. Doing so puts us on the broad way leading to eternal condemnation (Matthew 7:13,14).

2. **Authority** (2 Timothy 3:16,17). There are many voices wanting us to follow a path not authorized by God. Hear His voice of truth and understanding. Changing what I desire to what God desires for me will unify my conscience with the mind of God.

3. **Willingness** (Jn 7:17). Pride and hard-heartedness has a personal, lustful will in mind, not a divine will. I will be willing to change, because I realize I need divine direction, for it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23).

4. **Forgiveness** (Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9) We often believe the mercy we give ourselves, or others give to us, means more. God's forgiveness of me is primary. His mercy is what I can trust and accept. Take the steps needed to let God free you from sin.

5. **Transformed** (Romans 12:1,2). The world wishes to mold each person. It is never consistent and always changing, depending on what most people accept. I will no longer allow the world to influence my actions. I will fill my life with righteousness, godliness, and holiness.

6. **Responsibility** (Romans 6:16,17). I take responsibility for my life. I want to be an honorable vessel in His kingdom (2 Timothy 2:19,20). My body should be the temple for the spirit of God, and I should want to please the Father of all spirits.

7. **Commitment** (2 Timothy 1:12). I realize Jesus is the same. He is consistent. I need to loyally have and hold to that in a changing world. His promises are never interrupted by the rise of false doctrine. They remain the same and never fail.

8. **Hopeful** (Romans 8:17-25). I live each day in hope. God will guide me to the place He has prepared (Revelation 2:10).

9. **Persistence** (2 Peter 1:5-11). I will remember the forgiveness of my sins. I will diligently build on my faith, although I may stumble. Abounding always and enduring are not only the characteristics of love, but they should also be a description of my faith in God, the supplier of the entrance into the eternal kingdom.

10. **Service** (Matthew 20:28). Instead of thinking others should serve me, I will be a servant to others unconditionally.

11. **Gratitude** (1 Thessalonians 5:18). I am grateful for everything, and I use God's gifts in the honorable way He desires.

12. **Benevolence** (Acts 20:35). I may not be rich, yet I rejoice when I give, for God gave all to me in His Son Jesus.

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