

Perfect Τελειος

Τελειος (along with the same root word plus various endings) is translated perfect, mature, and complete in the various translations. But having three completely different English words for one Greek word is a problem, as though the translators were deciding the meaning according to what they believed the passage to be saying. But, having three different meanings implies that something was missed. A single definition, “consistent,” works in every context.

Matthew 5:48 “Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” In the previous 30 verses, Jesus reviewed many of the ways in which people rationalize self-righteousness. So, this perfection has to do with being consistent in all parts of life. Further, since God is Spirit, this perfection is not addressing physical behaviors. Rather, we are to be consistent in our godly character. Of course, that godly character will spill over into our behaviors. Jesus presented this conclusion as though it were an achievable goal.

Passages that associate perfection and people:

- John 17:20 – 23 Jesus prayed that His future followers “be τετελειωμένοι into unity.” Jesus says that He has given them His “glory,” which is His character. This character leads Christians to being consistent. One way this consistent character manifests itself is unity, which is to be evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Hebrews 12:23 The church is populated by “the spirits of righteous men made τετελειωμένων.” The implication is that God made these spirits consistent because they were not consistent.
- Hebrews 10:14 “For by one offering He has τετελείωκεν for all time those who are sanctified.” The sanctified have been made consistent.
- Hebrews 6:1 “Let us press on upon τελειότητα.” Due to the image of babies and milk in 5:12 – 14, this appears to be a figure of speech for the objective of growing up, becoming consistent.
- Colossians 4:12 Epaphras prayed that his friends in Colossae “stand τέλειοι and fully assured in all the will of God.” The subjectivity of maturity does not fit with the absolute statements of Epaphras’ prayer. Rather, he prayed for their consistency.
- 1 Corinthians 2:6 “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are τελείοις.” Verses 10 – 16 describes these consistent people as those who have “the mind of Christ,” referring to believers living on earth.
- Ephesians 4:13 Miraculously appointed leaders were provided “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a τέλειον man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” “Grow up” (verse 15) is a different word, describing a process. Consistency is the objective. If this consistency does not occur until Judgment Day, then Jesus’ prayer in John 17:20 – 23 failed.
- Philippians 3:12 – 15 Paul uses a play on words, describing himself as having “not already become τετελειώμαι,” but in the conclusion of the paragraph, includes himself in the group of those who are “τέλειοι.”
- Colossians 1:28 “That we may present every man τέλειον in Christ.”
- Hebrews 11:40 “Apart from us they should not be made τελειωθῶσιν.”
- James 1:4 “And let endurance have its τέλειον result, that you may be made τέλειοι and complete, lacking in nothing.”

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- James 2:22 “As a result of the works, faith was ἐτελειώθη.”
- James 3:2 “If anyone does not stumble is what he says, he is a τέλειος man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”
- 1 John 4:17 – 18 “By this, the love of God is τετελειώται with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but τελεία love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears in not τετελειώται in love.”

Passages that attribute perfection to God:

- Romans 12:2 Through our behavior (being living sacrifices) we prove what the τέλειον will of God is.
- 1 Corinthians 13:10 “When the τέλειον comes, the partial will be done away.” The completed Word is described as consistent.
- Hebrews 2:10 “Το τελειῶσαι the author of their salvation through suffering.” Consistency can be expanded, whereas perfection cannot.
- Hebrews 5:9 “And having been made τελειωθεὶς, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.”

Other passages about perfection:

- 2 Corinthians 12:9 “Power is τελεῖται in weakness.”
- Colossians 3:14 “Now beyond all these things, put on love, which is the τελειότητος bond of unity.”
- Hebrews 7:11 “Now if τελειώσις were through the Levitical priesthood...”
- Hebrews 7:19 “For the Law made nothing ἐτελειώσεν.”
- Hebrews 9:9 “Gifts and sacrifices were offered which cannot make the worshipper τελειῶσαι in conscience.”
- Hebrews 9:11 “He entered through the greater and more τελειοτέρας tabernacle.”
- Hebrews 10:1 The Law cannot “make τελειῶσαι those who draw near.”
- James 1:17 “Every τέλειον gift is from above.”
- James 1:25 “The τέλειον law, the law of liberty.”
- 1 John 2:5 “Whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been τετελειώται.”
- 1 John 4:12 “If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is τετελειωμένη in us.”