

No One's Perfect?

Since I am putting up this page at Kodesh Kallah to refute the false Pentecostal and Charismatic doctrines, I want to take a moment to go into one of the movement's defenses of doctrine, a common defense that proves to be erroneous. This is the claim that "*that which is perfect*" in 1 Corinthians 13:10 can only refer to the second coming of Yeshua. This is plainly false.

To review the passage we speak of, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 reads: "*Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*" This passage speaks of the ending of predictive prophesy as well as the ending of tongues, two of the three miracle sign gifts. However, the verse about their ending is qualified by the last verse, which speaks of these things happening when "*that which is perfect has come.*" Charismatics frequently demand that the miracle gifts could not have ended yet, since the only thing coming which could be perfect is the return of the Lamb, and that hasn't happened yet. As we shall see, this argument is without foundation. The word "perfect" biblically can refer to a number of things, including ordinary believers being mature or complete in their faith, as well as the law of God itself.

Before I go through some of the scriptures, let me remind you, in case you don't know already, that the case for the ending of the miracle gifts of the 1st century does not rest merely on this verse. It rests in fact on many things. It rests on the biblical pattern of God using miracle gifts temporarily for the specific purpose of verifying a messenger. It also fits with the gradual lessening and disappearance of the miracle gifts in the New Testament text itself. It fits with the multiple scriptures speaking of the apostles as being for the foundation of the Church, a foundation being something laid only one time. Moreover, it fits with countless observable data points, which tell us that these gifts certainly have not continued because we do not see them happening. So 1 Corinthians 13 is not necessary to make the case. However, it is a powerful scripture and speaks in plain language of gifts ceasing. It certainly deserves to be defended against weak contrary claims.

As I mentioned before, and as you can learn yourself with a few pushes of your computer keys, there is no requirement that the word "perfect" be used only to speak of God, or here of the Son of God. Rather, it is a word used frequently in scripture, and with many examples of other uses. For the purposes of this article, let's look at the main Greek word (Teleios) and the main Hebrew word (Tamim). These words, by the way, are often translated as "perfect" when you see the word in your Bible, but they are also often translated as other words or phrases, including – mature, of full age, blameless, upright, undefiled, sincerity, whole, complete and in the case of the many animal sacrifices, without blemish. Now I haven't even begun listing scriptures, and I think you can tell already this word can be used in multiple ways.

First let's look at the definition of the Greek word Teleios*. Here's a list of meanings:

- I. brought to its end, finished
- II. wanting nothing necessary to completeness
- III. perfect
- IV. that which is perfect
 - A. consummate human integrity and virtue
 - B. of men
 - i. full grown, adult, of full age, mature

Nothing there sounds like the word MUST refer to the Son of Man does it? Now let's look at the Hebrew word Tamim:

- I. complete, whole, entire, sound
 - A. complete, whole, entire
 - B. whole, sound, healthful
 - C. complete, entire (of time)
 - D. sound, wholesome, unimpaired, innocent, having integrity
 - E. what is complete or entirely in accord with truth and fact (neuter adj/subst)

Do the above definitions need to refer only to a flawless perfection such as God's? I don't think so.

In case you'd like to see how it is used in scripture, let me go through a number of them with you. I'm going to cover ones from *Tanach* (Hebrew Scriptures) and the Brit Chadasha (New Testament), so you'll be hearing both teleios and tamim. I won't list all of them, but I'll give you enough for a decent sample size and some variety.

Tamim:

Amos 5:10 They hate the one who rebukes in the gate,
And they abhor the one who speaks **uprightly**.

[As you might guess, I have bolded the word that tamim is translated as. Here it means "uprightly." I will do the same for teleios later.]

- In this example from Amos, the word is used to describe the speech of an ordinary person who speaks in a righteous way.

Genesis 6:9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, **perfect** in his generations. Noah walked with God.

- Here tamim is also speaking of a righteous man, and is translated “perfect.”

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be **blameless**.

- Here a man is commanded to be tamim, “blameless” before God.

Exodus 12:5 ‘Your lamb shall be **without blemish**, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

- In this case and many more, the word tamim speaks of the quality condition of the sacrificial animal. There are dozens of this usage in scripture. Let me just list a few more.

Leviticus 1:10 ‘If his offering is of the flocks—of the sheep or of the goats—as a burnt sacrifice, he shall bring a male **without blemish**.

Numbers 28:19 ‘And you shall present an offering made by fire as a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are **without blemish**.

Ezekiel 43:22 ‘On the second day you shall offer a kid of the goats **without blemish** for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they cleansed it with the bull.

How about some more non-sacrificial examples of tamim:

Deuteronomy 18:13 “You shall be **blameless** before the LORD your God.

- Once again we see instructions to ordinary men.

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, His work is **perfect**;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.

- Now we see the word describing the work of God himself, not just His being or character.

Joshua 10:13 So the sun stood still,
And the moon stopped,
Till the people had revenge
Upon their enemies.

Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a **whole** day.

- Here the word is translated “whole” and describes the completeness of the day.

Joshua 24:14 “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in **sincerity** and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

- In this verse, tamim is translated “sincerity” and instructs ordinary men in a sincere faith.

2 Samuel 22:24 I was also **blameless** before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.

- Here, the word describes the good behavior of ordinary human souls.

2 Samuel 22:31 As for God, His way **is** **perfect**;
The word of the LORD **is** proven;
He **is** a shield to all who trust in Him.

- Once again, the word is used to describe God, speaking of His way.

2 Samuel 22:33 God **is** my strength **and** power,
And He makes my way **perfect**.

- Once again, the word is translated as “perfect” and describes the way of a righteous man.

Psalms 15:2 He who walks **uprightly**,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;

- Once again, it speaks of an ordinary man, being translated “uprightly.”

Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD **is** **perfect**, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD **is** sure, making wise the simple;

- Here it is translated “perfect” and speaks of the law of God. Law, arguable, can speak of a number of things, both the commandments, as well as the Torah and all of scripture.

Psalms 119:1 **Blessed** **are** the **undefiled** in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD!

Proverbs 11:20 Those who are of a perverse heart **are** an abomination to the LORD,
But **the** **blameless** in their ways **are** His delight.

Teleios:

Matthew 5:49 “Therefore you shall be **perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is **perfect**.”

- Here both the believer AND the Lord are called “perfect”, or teleios.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and **perfect** will of God.

- In the above example, it is the will of God which is perfect.

1 Corinthians 2:6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are **mature**, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

- In this verse, the word teleios is translated “mature”, and speaks of ordinary souls.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be **mature**.

- Here, the same word is translated “mature”, and describes the mature attribute of understanding.

Colossians 1:28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man **perfect** in Christ Jesus.

- Again, we see it translated “perfect” and used to describe ordinary believers.

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food belongs to those who are **of full age**, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

James 1:4 But let patience have its **perfect** work, that you may be **perfect** and complete, lacking nothing.

James 1:25 But he who looks into the **perfect** law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

- In this example from James, perfect speaks of a law or principle.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but **perfect** love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Beloved, I realize that was a lot of examples, but please take the time later to go through them, and perhaps find others. These are a small fraction of the word uses.

What I want to point out again, is that in contrast to claims of Charismatics, this word “perfect” is not even close to being limited to speaking of God or Messiah. Far from it. It can be used and is very frequently used to speak of righteous men, the ways of righteous men, maturity, completeness, and the spotless quality of sacrifices. It can also be used to describe the law of God, or His perfect word. In fact, I have just quoted from the perfect law many times.

I say this to you, and write this overview of the word perfect, to remind orthodox believers of the solid ground they stand on when they point to the ending of the miraculous sign gifts, as well as when they speak of the ending of gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13. I realize many Charismatics these days will trot out PhDs to claim that the “perfect” could only possibly refer to Yeshua, but that is a truly absurd claim. It is even more absurd in the light of the word’s scriptural usage, which we have just reviewed. Besides, you can get PhDs to argue for nearly anything. You can find PhDs denying scriptural authority, scriptural inspiration, scriptural inerrancy, promoting abortion, promoting infanticide, promoting feminism and a lot more insanity. So don’t be intimidated by PhDs rewriting scripture. The word of God has infinitely more authority than they do. And the word of God, if you remember, is perfect.

As I stated at the start, we do not rest only on 1 Corinthians 13 in speaking of the miracle gifts ending early in the Christian era. We have many foundation stones for that belief. However, factually speaking, scripture predicts multiple gifts ending. Factually speaking the word “perfect” can speak of much more than the Lord himself. Let’s realize that the historical belief has always been correct: 1 Corinthians 13 predicts the miracle gifts ending at the completing of Holy Scripture, or the foundation of the Church itself. That’s not as exciting as many would like their faith to be, but it is true.



When an umpire’s mistake blew his perfect game in the 9th inning, it took a lot of grace for Armando Galarraga to simply smile and say – nobody’s perfect. While we admire Armando’s heart, unfortunately he is wrong. According to the Bible, ordinary people CAN be perfect.

*The word searches and definitions I provide here are from www.blueletterbible.com and Bible versions are either KJV or NKJV.