

Christian Maturity

by Denny Kenaston

Christian maturity is the goal of every Christian, where God is going with every one of us, and it involves growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:27:13

Scripture: Romans 15:13-14, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 5:13 - 6:1, Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 1:13-14

Topics: "Maturity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of applying the Word of God in our lives. He encourages Christians to mature in their faith by allowing the Word of God to shape their hearts and help them discern between good and evil. The speaker shares his personal experience of starting a writing business and the challenges he faced in the business side of things. He also highlights the value of trials in our lives, as they can lead to growth and a deeper reliance on God. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to persevere through difficult times and trust in God's perfecting work in their lives.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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Greetings. This morning, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we want to welcome you to the service, visitors. God bless you this morning.

We thank God that He brought you our way. Maybe different reasons why you're here. Maybe some because of the baptism.

Others, maybe you're just visiting. But we thank God that He brought you here today. And we trust that whatever your need is, He will meet it.

And whatever our need is, He will meet it. For He is the only one who can. Service will be a little bit different this morning.

I guess I should give that order as we begin. Because, as was announced, we're going to have a baptism. And it's going to be right after the service.

Often we have a fellowship meal and then a baptism. But today, we're going to have a baptism immediately after the service. So, because of that, we're going to have a main message now.

Then a children's lesson. And then there'll be a message on baptism. And then we'll go out to the site, which is not far, just back here in the field.

So, that's a little bit of the order of the service this morning. I'd like to speak this morning, by the leading of the Lord, on the subject of Christian maturity. And you know, this isn't a baptismal message, but it's good for those that are being baptized today to consider the subject in light of their baptism.

Because baptism is not an end. It's just the beginning. The salvation of a soul is not an end.

It's just the beginning. We sang that beautiful song this morning of those empty cells and all the glorious sounds that ring out of those empty cells. And that's beautiful and that's wonderful.

There's full deliverance. But you know, brothers and sisters, that's only the beginning. Praise God for glorious beginnings.

Praise God for the salvation of the soul. God wroughts a new change and gives a new heart and changes direction forever. But you know, that's only the beginning.

Only the beginning. Christian maturity is where God is going with every one of us. You know, I like that because that puts us all on level ground, doesn't it? Those who have come to the Lord recently and will step into the waters today, their commitment is to go on in the Christian maturity.

And those of us who have been sitting here in this building, some of us for ten or fifteen years, God's requirement on us is exactly the same. We must go on in the Christian maturity. So in that sense, the ground is level at the cross today.

Christian maturity is the goal of every one of us. So I want to speak a bit on that subject, Christian growth. 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18, Peter says these words to us, Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It's interesting to me, he wrote these words after a chapter of warnings about the last days. Interesting how those two flow together. You know, chapters of warnings about the last days, they can make you feel a bit uneasy when you read them at times.

You read them and you think, God, how will I make it through that? Oh, don't worry, Peter says. Beware of the things that happened in the last days. But don't worry about those.

Then the next verse says, But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, that's what God wants us to do. If we are fearful of the last days, let us put away our fear and grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

If we wonder how we're going to face the test of the last days, don't worry about those things. But don't just sit there and do nothing. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

That's how we can prepare ourselves for the last of the last days. Now this morning I'm using the word mature, Christian maturity. I'm using that word to relate to words of our day and our language.

But I don't know if you've ever noticed it before, but that word is not in the Bible. Did you know that? You know, I didn't know that. Somehow I thought it was.

But as I began to search through the concordance and look for that word, I found it not. But you know what word I found in place of the word mature? And as I pondered it and meditated upon it, it is a clearer word. That is the word perfect.

That's a bit different than mature, isn't it? Perfect. Has a bit of a cutting edge to it. The Bible word is perfect, and we in this land of ours are fast losing sight of this word, and replaced it with the word mature, and then watered that down with a relative maturity.

I think God wants and expects far more of His people than what He's getting today in this matter of Christian maturity. Some time ago, I was visiting with a brother from a distant state, and in another state, it wasn't here, in some of my travels. He'd been a Christian for ten years.

Ten years. That's a long time to be a Christian. Ten years.

But he said these words to me with tears in his eyes and words that were broken up as he said them. He said, where have I been for these ten years? He said, brother Denny, I just recently woke up to the reality that I've been a Christian for ten years. And where's my growth? He was burdened about it.

It was like, oh, the shocking reality. Ten years. Do you know it goes by pretty fast? Ten years.

It goes by pretty fast. A lot faster than you would think. The weeks turned into months, and the months turned into years, and all of a sudden he came to the shocking reality that ten years went by, and he's still struggling along, limping along, still a babe in his Christian life.

Now, he was by himself. I want to qualify his ten years of stunted growth. He's been by himself for most of those ten years.

He struggled in and out of this church and that church during those ten years. He went to a couple of formal churches with very little life in them. That was kind of his experience.

And those were some of the reasons why he didn't grow. But you know, God so wisely didn't show him those things. Those were things that I observed, but God showed him that his own heart had not grown, that his own heart had not responded properly.

And here he is now, ten years later, and he hasn't grown. By God's grace, we want to provide an atmosphere that encourages growth. I believe that's the way it should be.

Our natural tendency is to sit back and coast. But God wants us all to grow, every one of us. And I believe it's our responsibility as elders, as ministers, to help to provide an atmosphere in a congregation which encourages growth, which stimulates growth, sometimes challenges growth in our Christian lives.

We have a tendency to just sit back and let things ride. Oh, how quickly the years go by. Paul the Apostle found a group of Christians in the same condition.

And it might be surprising to you that he would find them that way because they were the Hebrew Christians, and these Hebrew Christians were the ones who sat at the feet of some pretty powerful men in their day. But here we find in Hebrews 5, we find a group of people who have not grown like they should. In Hebrews 5, verse 11, reading, Paul says to these Hebrew Christians, and I believe he's writing to Hebrew Christians in a general sense here, not necessarily to one church, because by then they were scattered in many places, although Jerusalem was still standing when these words were written.

But Paul says these words in verse 11 of chapter 5, of whom, speaking about Jesus, we have many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God. And ye are become such as have need of milk and not strong meat.

For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness. Look at that phrase. For he is a babe.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of a full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection. There it is.

There's that word perfect again. Therefore, leaving the principles, the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, and of the doctrine of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do if God permit.

Awesome words we find here in the book of Hebrews. Now, this man that I spoke to some time ago, he said nothing about being a teacher. Although if I would have opened up the Scriptures at that moment as we were talking together, and asked him about those verses, he would have readily agreed with me that yes, he's been a Christian for ten years.

It's high time that he be a teacher of the words of righteousness. For ten years have gone by in his Christian life. Paul said it this way over in another chapter, over in 1 Corinthians.

He said it this way. You don't need to turn there if you don't want to. But I'll just read you this verse speaking to the Corinthians.

There he's dealing with somewhat of the same problem. He says, And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. That's the way Paul said it to the Corinthians.

A Christian who has not grown to maturity is carnal, soulless, flesh dominated. May I say it that way? Is carnal, is soulless, or moving in their soul rather than being prompted by their spirits. Other words that help describe this word maturity.

We use the word perfect already. But let's look at some other Bible words. Whole.

That's a nice one, isn't it? Whole. Entire. Complete.

Sound. And healthy. Moderate.

Which means balanced, by the way. That's what moderate means. Balanced.

These are words which help us to understand what the word maturity means. That's where God wants to take each one of us in our Christian life. On to perfection.

On to wholeness. On to entirety, completeness, soundness, and health. Now let's turn for a moment over to Colossians.

Not far back in your Bibles. Colossians chapter 1. Where we see one of Paul's motivating purposes. And he's describing it here in Colossians, but it was one of his motivating purposes in every epistle in the New Testament.

In Colossians chapter 1, in verse 28, we find these words. He's preaching about Christ. He just finished telling them a glorious, wonderful mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

And he goes on to say in verse 28, Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, or in all the wisdom of the word of God. Can I say it that way? In all the wisdom of the word of God. Why, Paul? That we may present every man perfect in Christ.

Do you see that motivation? That was Paul's motivation. Here he goes around from this place to this, starting a church, getting another one on its feet. And what's his motivation? Oh, that I may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.

Now, I just want you to note that phrase right there. I want you to see that this is not just something that Paul is doing. Remember, God lived inside of Paul.

And God had complete control of Paul. And God's Spirit was in Paul mightily. And God's Spirit was moving Paul continually for the maturing of the saints.

That was his burden. That was his focus. So beautiful.

1 Timothy 3. We're just looking a little bit at what this word maturity means. In 1 Timothy, just a few pages over. I'm sorry, it's 2 Timothy.

Again, look into the heart of this man. This is God's will for Timothy, God's will for the church at Colossae, God's will for all the churches that were out there, and God's will for us. He says to Timothy here, But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.

He's speaking about himself there. You know who you learned these things from, Timothy. And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Why, Paul? That the man of God may be perfect. There it is again.

Thoroughly furnished unto all good works. We're just looking at a few of these verses here in the beginning, so that you can see from the Scriptures how the Scriptures define what maturity is. And here's one of those Scriptures.

Turn with me now to James. James chapter 1, verse 4 and 5. James 1, 4 and 5. But let patience have her perfect work. Or may I say, her perfecting work.

Her maturing work. Let patience have her perfect work. Why, James? That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Hallelujah! Look at that verse. That you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Now that's maturity, brothers and sisters.

You say, brother, that's too high of a standard. I didn't write it. God wrote it.

You say, are you there? I don't think so. But I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day. And that's all God expects of us.

See? It doesn't matter if you're going into the water today, or it's 30 years since you went into the water. Perfect and entire, wanting nothing. We're only looking at these verses so far, so we can understand a little bit what this matter of Christian maturity is all about.

And one more verse, just to help you here, in James 3. And verse 2, speaking about the tongue. Using the tongue as a reference point, as a sign of maturity in the Christian life. The tongue is under control.

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. These are verses which give us light and insight into God's heart on Christian maturity.

We see also in the book of Hebrews that Christ, our elder brother, was perfected through sufferings. Imagine that! He went through this whole process of training and purifying. Now, He didn't go through it like we do.

We face sins in our lives, but He still went through a process of purifying and suffering, and He was made perfect through that suffering. If I may say it this way, God took all those years from the time I believe He was twelve, when He said, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business, till the day when He laid Himself down on the cross, the Father was training Him, preparing Him, and perfecting Him that He might willingly lay down on that cross and die in faith and confidence in His Father. So Christ has gone through this same process of training and purifying.

Think about the example of Christ for a minute. He is our example of a perfect man. Amen? See Him there at the age of twelve, all the way to the age of thirty, waiting for His appearing, yet completely prepared to say, Yes, Lord, anytime.

There He was, from twelve to thirty, submitting to His Father, doing what His Father wanted, taking care of things in the carpenter's shop, but at the same time His heart was just like this, waiting for the voice of His Father to say, Now, my son, now. What beautiful balance and maturity! He was able and willing to be the carpenter's son, but yet able and willing to preach the Sermon on the Mount. And He stepped from the one to the other in just a matter of days.

He was bold enough to turn the money changer's tables upside down, yet lonely enough to steal away and go to the mountains in the midst of a crowd when they said, Let's make Him a king. That's maturity, isn't it? Beautiful! He could scathe the Pharisees for their dead orthodoxy and do it with a furrowed brow and a sharp tongue, and yet turn around and sit a child on his knee and bless that child, and that child felt as relaxed and comfortable as could be in His presence. He could sit at the rich man's table at Zacchaeus' house where everything was fine and the finery was there and everything was just right, and yet at the same time, He could also sit with the publicans and the sinners and they felt exactly at home with Him.

He could sleep on a soft bed, and He did at times, and He could sleep on the hard ground with a rock for His pillow, and He did them both, for the Son of Man has not a place to lay His head. He could do them both. Balance.

Solid balance. He spoke at the right time and had the right words to say every time, but at the same time, He could be quiet and His silence was as powerful as the words that He spoke. He had that thing in balance.

He was a perfect man, able also to bridle His whole body. He had enough discipline to pray all night when He needed to, and He had enough wisdom to rest when He needed to. He lived a rigid, disciplined life, yet He would turn aside in a moment and heal a lame person with compassion in His heart.

And in the end, that glorious end, He was able to lay Himself down willingly on that cross and say, Father, I delight to do Thy will, O my God. The Father brought Him through that process of purifying His every desire through the things that He brought Him through. Let's look for a moment here this morning at some of the marks of maturity.

The marks of maturity. Number one, surrendered life. And while it is true that we begin with a surrendered life, and by the way, we do, and if you've never found your place there, where your heart is totally given up to God, then you haven't even really began on this road of Christian maturity.

And while it's true that we begin there, there is a maturity of surrender where God brings our hearts and our lives to that place where our plans have given up, where our dreams are all given up, where our motives have been purified, where we've laid down all of our desires, where we have allowed God to deal with us, and we've submitted ourselves in such a beautiful way to His sovereignty that we can walk through life steady as she goes. A surrendered life is a mature life. Number two, the marks of maturity.

I have the word spiritual. We read it there in 1 Corinthians 3. Spiritual. But what does that mean? What did Paul mean? I couldn't speak unto you as unto spiritual.

What did he mean by that? The word spiritual means minding the things of the Spirit. A heart that is motivated by the things of the Spirit is spiritual. Consistently spiritual.

Romans 8 speaks about a walk in the Spirit. This is being spiritual. Paul said, I would that you were spiritual.

I want to speak to you, but I can't speak to you as unto spiritual. Those who are consistently walking in the Spirit. I can't do it, Paul says.

These are marks of maturity. Paul used the words there, and we read them in Colossians, perfect in Christ. What does he mean by that? Well, he said in another place there in Galatians, he said, O you

Galatians, I prevail in birth till Christ be formed in you.

That's what Paul was after. Oh, don't get me wrong this morning. Paul was not trying to get them to do a bunch of things.

He was after Christ being formed in them. And out of that many, many things come. That was Paul's burden.

He wanted to present the Colossians perfect in Christ. That's what it means. A strong, steadfast relationship with Christ.

Let's get a little more insight into Paul's burden for maturity in Colossians 1. Back just a few verses. In verse 9. Look at his burden for maturity here. He says, For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire.

Now here's maturity. Here's where he's going. That you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. A life that pleases God. That's what I'm after, Paul says.

Being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Strengthen with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience, longsuffering, and joyfulness with thanksgiving unto the Father. What is he saying? See, look what he's saying there.

By the grace of God being in you, strengthening you, unto patience and longsuffering and joyfulness and thanksgiving. That's maturity. Also, just to give you another little glimpse into the heart of a pastor.

In Colossians 4, verse 12 and 13. This is one of Paul's disciples. He discipled Epaphras.

Who is one of you. A servant of Christ. He saluteth you.

Always laboring fervently for you in prayers that ye may stand perfect and complete in what? All the will of God. That's maturity. That you might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

You say, brother, how much is that? Well, that's a lot. That's a lot. All the will of God for your life.

This is what Epaphras was praying. Where did he learn to pray that? He learned it from Paul. Where did Paul learn it? He learned it from God.

He saw into God's heart. He saw the glorious gospel. He saw the beautiful power that was released through the gospel.

The power of God and the salvation. He saw those things and he knew this is where God is taking the people. Who have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb.

Into a place where they could stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Beautiful. Beautiful words.

Great insights for us here this morning. Marks of maturity. We already looked at Hebrews chapter 5. But I'd like to just draw a couple of marks out of there.

What's marks of maturity? Teachers. Teachers. In Hebrews chapter 5 Paul says, You are old enough that you should by now be teachers.

And here I am having to come back again and remind you of the first principles of the Christian life. Remind you about the blood. Remind you about the foundation of repentance.

Remind you about the foundation of Christ. Remind you about your commitment of baptism. And the doctrine of baptism.

Here I am having to come and remind you of these things again. When in fact in reality you ought to be a teacher by now. And I don't believe in this context here that Paul is talking about teachers who stand up and teach everyone else.

But rather a whole congregation of teachers. Did you know that that's where God is going with every one of us? It is His heart that this congregation be filled with teachers. What do I mean by a teacher? One who has listened and studied and learned.

One who has applied what they have learned to their own life. One who has tasted the benefits of what they have applied to their own life. And yea, then one who will share it with confidence with others.

Listen, that every one of us in this room qualify for that definition right there. Because every one of us is learning. Every one of us is going on in our Christian life.

And God is teaching us things. We are constantly learning things that God wants us to learn. And as we learn them and apply them to our life, we begin to taste and realize, Oh God, this works.

Wow, this is beautiful what's happening. This is beautiful how God is working in my life. Those lessons on prayer that we heard about, they work.

That message I heard about sanctification, I see it worked out in my life. That message I heard about confession, it seems like every time I do that, grace just floods into my life. And soon you become a teacher.

And you are one who is able to speak and share with others that are around you. A church full of teachers. Is that being too strong? Is that lifting it up too high? I don't believe so.

I believe it should be that way. I believe God wants to take every one of us to that place that we, through our own experiences, having tasted the good word of God and seen how beautiful it is in our own lives, are able also to give it to others. We'll say more about that later.

But teachers, you don't have to be appointed a teacher to do this. Not at all. What are the marks of maturity? A lover of the Word.

A lover of the Word. I don't know if you've noticed it, but take note of many of these verses that we read on the subject of Christian maturity. What do you find right in the middle of them? The Word of God.

The Word of God. Just like Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 2, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby. Now you can interpret that two ways.

You can say, all you newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word. Or you could say, like a newborn babe, desire the sincere milk of the Word. Take it either way.

Either way, we see that the Word of God has a lot to do with this maturing process in the Christian's life. I didn't ask Him. Maybe I should have, but I didn't know I would use Him for an illustration there this morning.

But I didn't ask Him. But I wonder what He would have given me for an answer if I would have asked Him. How much have you made of the Word of God in the last ten years of your life? That's a good question to ask, isn't it? Oh, how life flies by here in America.

Oh, how busy we are. Oh, the distractions that come our way. Oh, the voices that call us to everything else.

But, brother and sister, it is through the Word of God that this maturing process takes place. A lover of the Word, who knows how to get their own food, they can take the Word into their own heart and chew on it, and meditate, and ruminate, and applicate that beautiful Word to their own heart and life. And, of course, find beautiful fruit coming out of it.

These are the marks of a mature Christian. Number five, one who can discern their world. One who can discern their world.

I didn't say my world. I said their world. Every one of us must discern our world.

My world is a little different than your world. Your world is different than my world. Some of you go to work in places where I don't go to work.

Some of you have to go places where I don't go. I have to go places where you don't go. But every one of us must learn to discern our world.

How do you do that? Well, we see it there in Hebrews chapter five so beautifully. Learning to be skillful in the Word of righteousness. Brothers and sisters, this is the Word of righteousness.

This is the revelation of the righteous character of the living God. And we must learn to be skillful in the Word of righteousness. How do you do that? You take the Word of God and you apply it to your world.

The world around me. The world around you. Every generation must learn to take the Word of God and apply it to their world.

Every father and every mother must take their responsibility and take the Word of God and apply it to the world of the children that are growing up in their house. We spoke a little bit back a few weeks ago about the generation gap. One of the reasons why there is a generation gap is because fathers don't take the Word of God and apply the Word to the world that their children are growing up in.

This is what the Bible says. This is how it applies to the world we're living in. Children, look at that TV.

Let me tell you why we don't have one. That's applying the Word of God. Oh men, we could say many, many things, but the sermon today is not to say those things.

The point is, it's part of Christian maturity to take the Word of God and so put it in the heart that that heart begins to exercise itself to discern both good and evil. Be able to look at the world around you and say, I'm not going there. I'm not exactly sure what I don't like about it, but I'm not going there.

We need to do that, brothers and sisters. The world is changing around us so fast. We must get in tune and stay in tune so that we can discern what is good and what is evil in our world around us.

This is one of the marks of maturity. Number six, using the word ministry. Now, we talked about teachers already, but I want to broaden the word a bit because it's more than just being a teacher.

Remember what Paul said to Timothy. In every good work, thoroughly furnished in every good work or every aspect of ministry that you find yourself in, one of the marks of maturity is ministry. Ministry.

You say, what do you mean by that, Brother Denny? I'm not up there preaching the sermon. No. There are dozens and dozens of different ways that you could describe what ministry is.

But it is the will of God that we come to equipping. We come to maturity. To the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry.

Ephesians chapter four. The equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. And that's part of maturity.

It's ministry. And lastly, number seven. And that's not an inclusive list, by the way.

But just enough so we understand. Marks of maturity. Able to admonish one another.

Able to admonish one another. Now this is a challenge to every one of us this morning. Able to admonish one another.

Those words we find in Romans chapter 15. Beautiful words of commendation and encouragement which Paul gave to the church at Rome. He said of them, reading in Romans 15 verse 13 and 14.

And I like the way these two verses go together. Now, the God of hope. Glory.

Fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another. Look at that beautiful phrase.

You know what he's speaking about? Christian maturity. Those other words there. Full of goodness.

Filled with all knowledge. Those are the same prayers that he was praying for the church at Colossae. He prayed them for the Thessalonian church.

He prayed them for the church at Ephesus. And here he is. He's never been here yet to Rome, but he knows about them.

And he uses these words in the context of Christian maturity and says, able also to admonish one another. And by the way, admonish flows both ways. As Paul was speaking of it there, it says one another.

Not just, although those of you that I'm writing to, you're able to admonish others. He doesn't say that. Able to admonish one another.

That means able, getting ahead of myself here, able to give admonishment tenderly, lovingly, yet truthfully, and also able to receive admonishment graciously and humbly. Those two go together. That's maturity, isn't it? That's maturity.

Able to admonish tenderly, lovingly, and truthfully. Now, most of us can tell other people what we think. That's true.

We don't have a problem doing that. We can tell other people what we think. That isn't necessarily admonishing one another.

You should look into the word admonish a bit. That's not our subject here this morning, but you look into it and see. It's not just telling people what you think.

It's not just telling them, you're wrong. I think you did this wrong. No, it's so much more than that.

It's coming to someone tenderly, lovingly, yet truthfully, and able to give it to them in such a way that when you walk away, they'll receive it. Thank you. Oh, they may not swallow it in five minutes, but they'll receive it.

Thank you. I want to pray about that. I want to think about that.

Able also to admonish one another. Hear those who have found themselves in the exercise of Matthew chapter 7, where Jesus said to us in the Sermon on the Mount there, when you see a mote in somebody else's eye, go through the exercise of purifying your own heart first. Make sure you take the beam out of your own eye.

Then you'll be able to see the mote that is in your brother's eye much more clearly, and you'll be able to take it out. That's maturity. Having purified my heart, having gone through that exercise, before I go and admonish someone.

Quickly here, let's look at some steps to maturity. You say, I don't want to be that man that you talked about this morning ten years from now. Good.

Good. That's a step in the right direction. It's not the only step that you need to take, but that's a step in the right direction.

That your heart would say that deeply. I do not want to be that man or that woman ten years from now. And guess what? For most of you, you will not.

Do you know why? We won't let you. We won't let you. Steps to maturity.

This is only for a few, but it's worthy of note. Like that dear man who was by himself. Get in a place where you can grow.

Get in a place where you can grow. This whole matter of Christian growth, God gives it in the context of a church. It's true.

Sometimes saints are thrown in a prison cell, and you can still grow in a prison cell. But for the most part, this whole matter of Christian growth takes place in a church. With brothers and sisters.

With all the things that God has in place for the church. Get in a place where you can grow. Where you can be challenged.

Where you have some examples to follow. Where there are those who will be helpers of your joy. Who delight to come alongside of you and encourage you when you take those steps of growth and face those needs in your life.

Get in a place like that. Where the wisdom of God is provided through the church. A healthy church.

Fertile soil where you can grow. This is the will of God. This is the wisdom of God.

This is what the church is all about. A healthy, fertile soil where Christians can grow. Where those who are being baptized today, can settle themselves down in the midst of this assembly, and having good examples, and being challenged, and being stirred and stimulated, both corporately and privately.

They can go on in their Christian life. This is the wisdom and will of God in the church. Number two.

You must learn to abide and walk with a clear conscience. I say, Brother Denny, you've said that so many times. I know, I've said it so many times.

Did you get it? We cannot even begin to hope that we will mature very much in ten years, if we do not learn to abide in Him. Those two go together. To abide in Him is not some super spiritual Christian experience.

We cannot grow until we come to grips with the reality of abiding in the vine on a consistent basis. It just doesn't work. Can't do it.

These are the first steps to maturity. And by the way, these are the requirements for communion. You know, we're going to have communion tonight.

These are the requirements for communion. Did you know that? Now, praise God, if you go through things yesterday, and maybe this afternoon, and make sure that everything is clear so you can come to communion. God bless you for that.

But that's not God's heart for you to wait until Saturday and get everything all straightened up for communion on Sunday. God's heart for communion is a life that is abiding in communion with God. Not perfect, but steady there.

You lose your way, but you're right back on again. That's the requirements for communion. And the first steps to maturity.

Number three. We talked about the Word of God. Well, here's the Word of God again.

All through these verses, have you noticed that the Word of God is mentioned? This is the prime element of Christian growth. Where are we at? Our attitude toward the Word of God is going to affect our Christian growth. James chapter 1 says it this way.

Receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save your soul. That's Christian growth, brothers and sisters. That's what it is.

Receive with meekness the Word of God. The engrafted Word which is able to save your soul. I mean, look at the posture there.

Look at the attitude there. Look at the heart there. This is able to save my soul.

Here I come. Here I come to church on Sunday morning. This Word of God is able to save my soul.

Here I come. It's Monday morning. It's Monday morning.

I come to the Word of God. This Word of God is able to save my soul. Do you see the attitude? It affects how we read the Bible.

It determines whether we ever meditate on the Bible. It affects how we listen on church and what we do in our free time. Our attitude toward this book is not a little thing.

What you do with the Bible will determine what God does with you. Mark that down. Memorize that.

What you do with the Bible will determine what God does with you. If it's that way. If it sits in your house like that.

If the days go by and it's like that. And then on Sunday you pick it up and you come and open it up. What you do with the Bible will determine what God does with you.

The Word of God. Number four. Trials and testings.

We're almost done here. I'm not sure how my time is. This is a different time for me.

I guess I'm okay. Number four. Trials and testings.

We're talking about going on to maturity. Hear these words. In the last chapter of 1 Peter.

1 Peter chapter 5. Some of the last words in that chapter. Which by the way. If you go through the book of 1 Peter.

He talks about trials and testings. And sufferings. And persecutions.

And railings. And all kinds of problems. In 1 Peter.

And in chapter 5 in verse 10. Peter finishes by saying these words. But the God of all grace.

Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus. After that ye have suffered a while. Make you perfect.

Establish. Strengthen. Settle you.

What a beautiful definition of maturity. Make you perfect. Establish.

Strengthen. And settle you. Trials and testings.

How do we view them? Trials and testings. If we want to go on unto perfection. We maybe need to change the way we look at trials and testings.

They make you perfect. They settle you. They strengthen you.

They establish you. That's what they do. Say brother.

They are not doing that for me. Well maybe you are not looking at them right. See.

They are friends. See. Coming to you.

You say they don't seem like friends to me. I know. I know.

They don't always seem like friends to me either. But they are friends. Trials and testings.

The words of James. So quickly here. Let's read them.

I just read the one verse. But look at these words in James. James 1 verse 2. My brethren count it all joy.

When ye fall into divers temptations. Knowing this. That the trying of your faith.

Worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work. That ye may be perfect and entire.

Wanting nothing. And in the midst of your trial. In the midst of your testing.

If any of you lack wisdom. Let him ask of God. Who giveth to all men liberally and abradeth not.

And it shall be given him. But. Let him ask in faith.

Nothing wavering. Here we go. We are going through a trial.

Things aren't going too well. We are having some sufferings. We are having some difficult situations.

Not sure how to get through this. Don't despair. Don't give up.

Don't get the moe grubs. Don't have a pity party. Get on your knees and say.

God. Give me wisdom. Now.

I'm looking to you. I'm trusting you. Give me wisdom to see my way through this.

God. Will give you. Wisdom.

And you know what will be the end result? Maturity. You will take steps. Toward maturity.

As you walk through those trials. I wish that I could tell you. That it just all flows in you.

And it's all done and said. But it's not that way. God.

Purifies and matures us. Through trials and testings. And by the way.

He made the captain of our salvation. Perfect through suffering. And lastly.

Steps. To maturity. I want to make this last point.

Faith. Faith. Maybe.

We miss it on this one right here. Maybe we miss it on this one. Faith.

Being confident of this thing. That he which has begun a good work in you. Shall perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

Now that is a faith filled statement. Being confident of this one thing. That he.

Which has begun. A good work. In you.

In me. Shall. Perform it.

Unto the day of Jesus Christ. That's faith. See.

That's faith. See we need to see where God's going. I think sometimes we lose sight of where God's going.

And we just think. Oh. It's just.

Troubles and problems. And everything goes wrong. And no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Lift your eyes higher. He. Is doing a work.

In you. And he's got eternal values in mind. Paul said it this way to the Thessalonians.

After he blessed them by saying. May the God of peace sanctify you wholly. Spirit.

Soul. And body. And preserve you blameless.

Under the coming of his kingdom. And then he said these words. Faithful.

Is he. That calleth you. Who will also.

Do it. Look at those words. Those are words of faith.

Not words of despair. Those are words of hope. Not words of discouragement.

Those are words with. Fire us. And.

Inflame us. With a desire to. Keep on going.

Keep on going. And we must keep on going. Brothers and sisters.

We must. Let us go on. On to perfection.

And Paul said these words. For I am persuaded. I better.

I can't quote it. I'm getting the other verse in there. For the which cause I also suffer these things.

Context of suffering. I suffer these things. Nevertheless.

I. Am not. Ashamed. Thank you Paul.

Kicked around. Made fun of. Called a liar.

Called a devil. Thrown in jail. Made fun of some more.

Mocked by the Jews. I. Am not. Ashamed.

For I know. Him. I know.

Whom. I have. Believed.

And am persuaded. That he is. Able.

To keep. That. Which I have.

Committed. Unto him. Against.

That. Day. Christian maturity.

These verses in closing. They're often given as a benediction. So we'll give them as a benediction.

To this sermon. This morning. In Hebrews.

Chapter 13. In verse 20. Now the God of peace.

Hallelujah. That brought again. From the dead.

Our Lord. Jesus. That great shepherd of the sheep.

Through the blood. Of the everlasting covenant. Make.

You. Perfect. In every.

Good work. To do his will. Working in you.

That. Which is well pleasing. In his sight.

Through Jesus Christ. To whom. Be glory.

Forever and ever. Amen. Brothers and sisters.

Everything I've said this morning. Is done. Through.

Jesus Christ. It comes. By allowing God.

To work in you. That which is well pleasing. In his sight.

Through. Jesus Christ. Our Lord.

May God help us all. To go on. Unto perfection.

Not be satisfied. Where we're at. Keep.

Our heart. Up. Don't be discouraged.

Do not despair. But know. That God.

Knows what he's doing. In your life and mine. And he is requiring of us.

Christian. Maturity. Shall we pray? Lord God this morning.

Our hearts. Thrill. To ponder this subject.

Once again. We want to grow Lord. That's why we're here.

That's why we came this morning. We want to grow. We're not satisfied.

Where we are father. That's one of the reasons. Why we're here.

Lord. Please. Father.

Make this place. Fertile soil. Where thy people.

Can grow. Give. Us.

Ministers. Wisdom. To lead the people.

On. The maturity. Through Jesus Christ.

And I pray that. In Jesus name. Amen.

We thank the Lord for. His word given to us this morning. Come to come to us through our brother Denny.

Bless God for. His teaching to us. The subject of.

Christian maturity. And. I feel like I've.

Had many areas in which to grow. Thank you brother Denny for that teaching. First Peter chapter one.

We have this verse also. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind. Puts a responsibility on us.

Be sober. And hope to the end. For the grace that is to be brought on to you.

At the revelation. Of Jesus Christ. As obedient children.

Not fashioning yourselves. According to the former lusts. In your ignorance.

We're going on. I believe each one of us. Has a has a. Burden in our hearts to go on.

We're not stopping here. I mean yes there was a time when we. Were born again and.

Received the Lord Jesus Christ as our savior. And we were baptized. Some will be baptized today.

But appreciated so much the thought. That what we do with this. And really what we do with this.

Is what we do with God. You know how important this is to us. Is how important God is to us.

Because this is his word. To his people. And so I appreciated that thought.

This morning. And. The church.

Also. The need for the church. Body.

Committing. Ourselves to God. And his word.

Submitting ourselves to God. And his word. Also committing ourselves to the church.

To be admonished. To be taught. Through the church.

And submitting ourselves. Committing us first of all. And then submitting us.

To the word. To the Lord. To the church body.

And so forth. Lord help us. Lead us onward.

Each one of us. We want to have a time here. Where we open.

The service to the congregation. For sharing. Some further thoughts on the message.

Testimony of how the Lord has worked in your life. A confession. If there is a burden on your heart.

You need to confess. This is your time to share together with us. There will be a microphone passed around.

If you have something to share. You can raise your hand. Raise it high.

Go ahead Denden. I was going to share this morning. That I can say.

Amen to our brother's message. Because God is doing that in my life also. He is showing me that.

That the trials he brings into my life. Are perfecting me. And yes they aren't pleasant.

But I have been in the valley many times. But the sweetness of coming to the other side of that. And getting another foothold on that mountain side.

Has been so sweet. It has driven me further. And I just want to encourage anybody.

Who is just struggling to find their way through some valley again. Some experience that God is taking you through. Don't give up.

It is not worth it. It is a trial. But by God's grace you get through it.

And I can say that I agree with my brother. God is in a work. And we ask him so often to do it.

We say God just help us. To be what you want us to be. But oh my.

When he starts doing it. We regret we asked him almost. And we say why Lord.

But just help us get through it. Is my prayer for each one of us. Thank you brother for sharing what God has placed on your heart.

Amen. Father. Yes I just feel that I am a pupil of the Lord.

And I just look back and see where I was. I just praise him every day. That he has taken me closer and closer to him.

And my heart right now is trembling. Because there is so much more I want to give to get. And every time someone is giving a sermon.

Or every time I read the Bible. Or every time I talk to a brother and sister. I want to get closer to the Lord.

I am very hungry and I am very thirsty. And there are so many beautiful things. Because it is between me and my creator.

It is not between anybody in here. But people in here can help me get to my creator. And the Bible is my source of getting to my creator.

I never used to like to read. But he has given me a hunger to read. Because what he gives me is real.

And I know it is real because I feel it is real. I just feel every day I read the Bible. He makes me feel that I am born again.

I have learned something new. He opened another page. He has taken another layer of junk off of me.

To replace it with grace and glory. And replace the trash with what the Lord has to give me. And it is so powerful.

And it is so beautiful. And it is so real. That I just pray someday that I can preach to the world.

As a teacher. Like Denny was saying. That I am so proud to be a Christian.

I am so proud to be a Christian. And I am so happy that I am not in the religion. Because I am in the something that is alive.

Each day. He was the same yesterday as he is today. And he is so powerful.

And you know I pray for all my brothers and sisters every night. I really do. That we can all move closer to him.

Each day. If we get caught up in the world we are wasting our lives. Like Denny said.

And time does go by very fast. I can't believe on the age I am. And I look back and I can remember when I was in high school.

So I just pray for all of you. Don't waste your life on something foolish. If you are going to waste your life.

Waste your life on something real. And I don't mean waste. I don't mean that word waste.

But go forward. Move on. Do what God has given us.

He has given us a great gift. Don't take it for granted. Like we did before we were Christians.

And we can easily do that. We can easily fall in the ditch. But we have an obligation each and every one of us here.

To make sure we don't do that. And I thank my brothers and sisters that call me weekly or monthly. And say how are you doing.

And God has given us a love that you can't buy. It's a love that continues to grow. And it grows so beautiful.

Beyond our words. And we will find out someday when we meet him in heaven. What kind of love he has for us.

So we need to earn it on this earth. When we go to heaven. Thank you very much.

I am very grateful for Sundays here at Charity Christian Fellowship. What a blessing. What a privilege to start a week this way.

I couldn't have asked for a better message. A more appropriate message for right where I am at in my life. This past week was I think one of the most exciting and yet one of the most difficult weeks I have had in a long time.

I have begun a writing business. And by faith the writing side is very enjoyable. The business side is what's difficult.

And Friday was my first client. And it was wonderful to be able to sit and do the things that God has enabled me to do. And to be able to work there at home and do some of the things that the Lord has shown us to do.

But then Saturday came. And to sit and try and do the more technical side. The side that I am not trained in.

God is beginning to speak to me. And I may not be right on this but I will try to fumble out the words anyways. He is beginning to speak to me the difference between faith and trust.

I have a good deal of faith that He can write through me to provide for my family. To make a living. But I am learning that my faith is different than my trust.

Trust has to do with those things that I just don't understand. Those areas that I am just not competent in. And that's why I am so grateful for the message this morning on perfecting.

And especially how Brother Danny weaved in the theme of meekness or yieldedness. Surrendering. Letting God provide.

Letting God give the wisdom and do the work through you. I have to learn to trust Him on those things that I just cannot do. So I share this as a testimony, as a blessing.

But finally I want to share it as a prayer request. I know as I share these words there are many brothers who have ventured where I am at. And have gone beyond and are doing well with their own businesses.

And I ask your prayers. I am sure many of you men started with great desires and knew what you were good at. But then also were made aware of the realities of where your shortcomings are.

Please pray that I would have the humility and discernment to end the business if I can't go forward in my weaknesses. Or to wait on the Lord if He is just wanting to grow me up and perfect me in those weak areas. It's a real world.

There are real decisions that need to be made. And I need to know discernment. How to continue on.

But praise God. All business aside. Just for the blessed hope.

Just for the ability to have His Spirit say I am going to comfort you like we sang this morning. Regardless of your ability or inability I am going to comfort you. And I just thank God for His comfort.

I thank God for His Holy Spirit. And His long suffering with us. Amen.

God bless you Jeff. Thank you for sharing your heart with us. And we know how to pray for you.

Brother Ben. I would also like to thank the Lord for His word that was brought to us this morning. You know I am continually amazed and blessed.

And I just want to thank the elders here for being open to the Lord. How many times that when working through issues in my own life or in the areas of my children. Or those that God has called me to minister to.

I come here Sundays in church and just get what I need to press on and to go on. And this morning was one of those mornings. Praise the Lord.

Amen. Is there a hand over here? Yes I just want to say thank you for the message this morning too. God has been speaking to me for a while already in different ways about the trials that are coming into my life.

And I know just a while ago I listened to a tape by Zac Poonen and it just really blessed me. What he said about those trials and God bringing trials into our lives. And then at random I opened the Bible and I read those same verses.

And about a week later a sister talked to me about those verses. And it has just been coming from every side. And God has just been speaking to me on those verses.

And it has just been a real blessing. I can now say, you know, at first I was thinking God is allowing these trials in my life. But it's not God is allowing them.

God has brought them into my life for a purpose. And I just want Him to do that work in me. And allow those trials to bring me closer to God.

I also have several praise reports that I wanted to give for quite a while already. Many of you know the little foster son that I have, Taimir. When he came into my home over 10 months ago, he was diagnosed with profound hearing loss in both ears.

He was deaf in one ear and they thought there might be a possible response on the other ear. He just did not respond to any sounds. And he had many other medical problems also.

And the doctors are working on that. But on his ears they said it's in the nerve and there is nothing they can do. That we just need to learn sign language and there is nothing they can do for his ears.

But that's the one area where God put His finger on him and has touched him. And his hearing has come in both ears. Just this week we had another hearing test done.

And they said at this point it shows that there is a mild hearing loss. But it's just very mild at this point. And he can hear a lot, almost everything I think.

So I just wanted to praise God for that and give God the glory. And then also I want to thank God for His protection on my life. I was involved in an accident yesterday and it could have been very serious.

But God had mercy and nobody was injured. And I just want to thank God for that. Praise Him.

Amen. Praise the Lord. Brother Merle.

Amen brother. Thank you for the message. I had to think of this song that says, In the valley He restores my soul.

And just different testimonies here this morning hearing about, you know, maybe we have a hard time in life. And my testimony is that it's in those valleys that He restores our soul. It's those places where He does grow us up.

And a little lesson that I've learned in the last maybe half year, a year. I'm still learning. I don't feel like I've learned it like I need to yet.

But the quote is to let go and let God. And so many times we think we can help God do the work when we're in the valley. But I think like brother Jeff shared, we need to learn to trust God.

I need to learn to trust God and just let go. And just say, alright God, I can't see it all, but I trust you as my guide. And just to not struggle.

It seems like when we cease our struggling, just let go. That God can finish His work so much faster without our help. So just share that as a word of testimony.

What God's been doing in my life. And you know, if there's somebody here that's struggling, that's what God wants to do. He wants us to let go.

Hand on the front here Ed. I feel like I'm the guy that brother Daniel was talking to. That ten year guy that was sitting all alone.

But praise the Lord it's only been like five years for us. And I thank God that He did not allow us to be satisfied where we're at. And I'm looking forward to growing the Lord with you.

And just to open myself up and be humble. And as you pray for us, we just moved in last Sunday. And we're expecting a blessing into just growing the Lord and the power of His mind.

I praise God for the message this morning. Thank you. Welcome to the congregation here brother Sam.

We welcome you. Let us rise for prayer. Father we do thank you for the message that you've brought to us this morning Lord.

For the teaching that you've shown us through our own hearts Lord. And I pray Father that we would take it home with us Lord. And apply ourselves Father to maturity.

To a longing, may that longing Father continue to be in our hearts Lord. That we would long to be perfect. We sing the words Lord.

Oh to be like Thee. Blessed Redeemer. This is my constant longing and prayer.

May that be reality in each one of our hearts Father. That we may go onward. We thank you Lord for your blessings upon us.

Father we thank you for these that have shared in this time of opening sharing here Lord. And we just bless you and praise you and thank you for the healing that you've brought to that little child. Rosella's little child.

We thank you for that. We give you all of our praise Lord. We know Father that you're full able to do these things Lord.

And we bless you for it Lord. Truly you have been good to that little boy Lord. And to our sister Rosella.

We thank you for that. We thank you for the safety that you've provided for her on the road Lord. And also for Andy's little child Lord.

And Father we just know that your hand is upon us every day Lord. And you just keep us in your care and we bless you for that. We thank you for our brother Jeff Lord.

And him sharing with us Lord his business venture. And we pray Father you give him wisdom. We pray Father you give him understanding of your will Lord.

As he applies himself in this area Father. Help him to know Lord. With a certainty what your will is for his life Lord.

For providing for his family Lord. We thank you dear Lord. We thank you for these that have shared Lord.

That they're not, they've asked for forgiveness Lord. And that they're not where they have pretended to be Lord. And we just pray Father.

In the name of Jesus Lord. That you would pour grace into their lives. And free them Lord from any bondage Lord.

That is holding them back Lord. Thank you Father for this time of open sharing. Thank you Lord that we can share with one another Lord our needs.

And I just pray Father we would just, just go on. And persevere. Looking ever onward.

Looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith. We thank you in Jesus name. Amen.

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