BORN TO MATURE

The Necessity For Spiritual Maturation In The Dispensation of Grace

Part 1

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INTRODUCTION

Someone once made this statement about physical growth:

"Everyone grows old, maturity, however, is optional".

The desire of every parent for their children is that they grow. It is abnormal for a parent not to expect the physical and emotional development of their children. Kids who don't mature physically and emotionally are viewed as suffering deficiency. Grace Believers has the ability to grow and mature, spiritually. Spiritual maturity can be defined as the experiential use of factual knowledge. Dr. H. Lavern Schafer, author of "The Maturing of the Spiritual Christian" defines maturity in this way:

"***All Christian growth, or maturing, is in the realm of experiential knowledge, which is intellectual knowledge put into practice so that one gains actual experience based on that knowledge. "Head" knowledge then becomes knowledge related to experience***."

The believer failing to mature has not arrived at the destination that has been provided for him in this Dispensation of Grace. The Jewish believers in the Book of Hebrews, for example, were not maturing. They had given up on living the Christian Life due to persecution. These believers desired to go back under law. The apostle Paul wrote to exhort them to leave the things of law and be borne on to maturity.

Once one believes the facts of the gospel, the potential exists for maturity. However, maturity is not guaranteed. Encounters with the believer's enemies (World, Flesh, Satan) often derail believers from sustained growth and thereby maturation. God has provided a means for believers to mature. He doesn't, however, force the believer to mature. Scripture teaches that the maturing believer is more capable of being effective in God's program than those believers who are not. We will consider in this class, what is maturity. How does the believer gain spiritual maturity? Why is maturity important?

We will discover from this class that Scripture teaches that immaturity is abnormal. It is abnormal in physical growth. It is also abnormal in spiritual growth. We will see that it is the maturing believer that is well positioned to accomplish all God's desires of him/her in this Dispensation of Grace.

I. THERE ARE VARIOUS MATURITY-RELATED WORDS USED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

A. Two words are prominently used for "*perfection*" in the Old Testament.

1. *Tamim* is used in the Old Testament of ***one who is without blemish, sound, uninjured; the proper notion is that of simplicity, sincerity, absence from guile or evil intention; implying completeness of parts rather than degree***. '' – Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies cf. Gen. 6:9; 17:1; Job. 1:1
2. *Salam* is used in the Old Testament ***to convey completely finishing or perfecting of a work, or to the doing anything in a full and complete manner; when used of Old Testament*** saints it means to walk in God's statutes, and keep his commandments. cf. 1 Kings 11:4; 15:3

B. There are several words that are used in the New Testament that indicate movement in spiritual growth apart from *teleos*.

1. *Stereo,* is a word used for ***the increase in stability that one encounters due to spiritual growth***. Acts 16:5 (seen in early churches)
2. *Endunamoo* is used in Scripture to indicate ***the inner power that one gains in the inner man as a result of growth***. Acts 9:22 (seen in the apostle Paul)

C. The use of perfection in the New Testament indicates spiritual maturity.

1. The Greek word *teleios*, used to indicate "*perfection*" denotes "***a spiritual completion***."
    a) Louis Sperry Chafer describes the use of the word as "***spiritual experiences which may extend over a lifetime and involve a growth in knowledge, a continued experience of being filled with the Spirit, and a maturity in judgment in spiritual things***."
    b) Lavern Schafer defines *teleios* as "***the effect of experiential knowledge gained while a believer is spiritual, or Spirit-filled, and acting in any situation in a Scriptural manner***."
    c) Vines defines *teleios* as "***that which signifies having reached its end, complete perfect***."
2. Teleos as it relates to spiritual maturity (perfection) is only used in the Pauline epistles.
    a) Paul first introduces the idea of maturity to the Corinthians. 1 Co. 2:6
    b) Paul offered the Colossians the mechanism by how each believer was to mature. Col. 1:28
3. The word *perfect* is used in Scripture to denote that which is the completion of an advancing entity.

a) The canon of Scripture was seen as reaching completion of God's revelation for the Dispensation of Grace. cf. 1 Co. 13:10
b) The building up of the Body of Christ is advancing towards completion. Eph. 4:13

II. SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS GROWTH THAT OCCURS FROM PUTTING INTO PRACTICE FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE RESULTING IN EXPERIENTIAL AND FULL EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE.

A. **Oida** is the entry-level of the acquisition of knowledge necessary for maturity.
1. Oida – ***to possess factual knowledge about a thing***.
2. The word is from the root word *orao* which entails ***the ability to see with mental discernment of thought, thereby deriving facts about the thing viewed***. -- K.D.J. 1st Co. 2:12 (of the things graciously given by God); 1st Thess. 4:5 (negatively of those who don't know the facts about God)
3. Oida knowledge is used with *ginosko* several times in Scripture. Cf. 2 Co. 5:16; Heb. 8:11; 1st John 5:20

B. **Ginosko** – ***a fragmented experiencing of factual knowledge***. cf. Rom. 1:21; 2 Co.5:16
1. Experiential knowledge in general is insight gained into a subject matter that one previously only understood factually.[1]
a) The aorist act. Indicative of *ginosko* is used to point out the time when Paul came to understand the sin nature as a result of the law.
b) Oida is used in the pluperfect to note completed action that existed at some time in the past.[2]
2. Experiential knowledge is defined as:
a) "***Basically it means to notice, perceive, or recognize a thing, person, or situation through the senses, particularly the sight. This leads to an intelligent ordering in the mind of what has been so perceived in the world of experience. -- the act of knowing through experience. With ginosko there is always the implication of grasping the full reality and nature of the object under consideration. It is thus distinguished from mere opinion (dokeo -- think), which may grasp the object half correctly, inadequately or even falsely***." -- Dictionary of New Testament Theology
b) The root of the word γινώσκω is γνώ which base meaning is ***to know, perceive; learn***.[3]
(1) ***A fragmented experiencing of factual knowledge***. cf. Rom. 1:21; 2 Co.5: 16
(2) Experiential knowledge is defined as "***knowledge gained while spiritual***."[4] John 18:15; cf. 1 Co. 8:1; 10

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[1] The law gave the apostle Paul a clear understanding of the sin nature. Rom. 7:7

[2] Used of oide in John 1:31, 33 (of John not knowing the facts about the Lord)

[3] Greek Word Roots -- Thomas Rogers (pp. 13)

[4] The experience of chastening and the resulting change in the believer's life add to his maturing. This realization of how the body becomes the Bride when all members are cleansed and sanctified brings knowledge which can then be experiential (γινώσκω). -- "Maturing In Christ" -- H. L. Schafer (pp. 255)

3. Only the believer can possess an experiential knowledge of biblical truth. cf. 1 Co. 2:14
    a) The natural man does not welcome things from the Spirit of God.
    b) The natural man is unable to know in his experience the things from the Spirit of God.
        (1) Experiential knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ coupled with grace is the means of initiating spiritual growth. 2 Pet. 3:18
            (a) The term used for "grow" is *auxano*[5] which emphasizes "to increase in the extent of or in the instances of an activity or state." -- Louw-Nida
            (b) "In grace" en chariti -- is the locative use of the Greek preposition "in" noting in a sphere of. Cf. 2 Co. 1:12 (it was in a sphere of grace that Paul had his routine manner of life in the world).
            (c) "In knowledge"[6] of our Lord and Savior.[7]
    c) An experiential knowledge[8] of the Son of God was among three things desired by the apostle Paul. Phil. 3:10
        (1) Paul desired to experientially know Him. vs. 10
        (2) Paul desired to experientially know the power of His resurrection. Vs. 10
        (3) Paul desired to experiential know the sharing in common of His sufferings. Vs. 10
    d) God uses circumstances to produce experiential knowledge in the life of believers. cf. Rev. 2:23
    e) Experiential knowledge leads to a believer maturing.[9]

C. **Epiginosko** is a full experiential knowledge of a matter, knowledge upon knowledge. A full experiential knowledge works in a similar way to compound interest. A full experiential knowledge is valuable in the life of a believer because it crystallizes truth in the mind of the believer. The crystallization of this truth affects the ability of the believer to more consistently see things the way they really are. With this insight in hand, the believer then maintains the capacity to walk in a way that is pleasing to God. We will explore the usages of the terms for *epiginosko* to discover the full extent of its effect upon the New Testament saint.

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[5] Pres. Act. Imper. (Peter instructs the believers of something they really need to do; what's in their best interest -- only pres. Imper. Use of the word); it is used of physical growth (Lk. 1:80) and spiritual growth (Col. 1:6)

[6] Future Act. Ind. of γνώσει

[7] 2 Pet. 1:11; 3:20

[8] Aor. Act. Indicative of γνῶναι cf. Acts 1:7 (of the times and seasons); Acts 17:10 (to gain insight into teaching); Eph. 3:19 (concerning the love from God); the articular only used in Phil. 3:10

[9] "Maturity is the effect of experiential knowledge (γινώσκω) gained while a believer is spiritual, or Spirit-filled, and acting in any situation in a Scriptural manner. One of the measures of Christian maturity is understanding and application of the Word of God, rightly divided." -- H. Lavern Schafer (Maturing in Christ). "The Christian can then realize that God has provided some better thing for New Testament saints than for all of the Old Testament believers. (Heb. 11:39-40) By relating these better things to his own life style he gains experiential knowledge and grows by grace and by the experiential knowledge of Christ.

1. Two definitions of *epiginosko* include:
    a) "***Basically it means to notice, perceive, or recognize a thing, person, or situation through the senses, particularly the sight. This leads to an intelligent ordering in the mind of what has been so perceived in the world of experience. -- the act of knowing through experience. With ginosko there is always the implication of grasping the full reality and nature of the object under consideration. It is thus distinguished from mere opinion (dokeo -- think), which may grasp the object half correctly, inadequately or even falsely***." -- Dictionary of New Testament Theology
    b) ***Experiential knowledge upon experiential knowledge, it is the result of experiencing something over and over agai***n***; a complete experience; A full experiential knowledge is valuable in the life of a believer because it crystallizes truth in the mind of the believer. The crystallization of this truth affects the ability of the believer to more consistently see things the way they really are. With this insight in hand, the believer then maintains the capacity to walk in a way that is pleasing to God.*** -- K.D.J. cf. Rom.3:20; Acts 3:10
    c) Recognition of people and situations result from a full experiential knowledge.
        (1) It is used to note recognition of legitimate believers. Matt. 7:16, 20
        (2) It is used for giving recognition to those who refreshed Paul's spirit.
    d) It is used to note recognition of members of the Godhead.
        (1) Of the Lord recognizing the Father and the Father the Son. Matt. 11:27
        (2) The difference here is that they knew the Lord, not in an intimate understanding of His nature, but were aware of His activities and His doctrine and His capacity to heal. Cf. Mk. 6:33-34; Matt. 14:35; Mk. 6:54
    e) It is used of some people who recognize others.
        (1) Rhoda the slave girl who recognized[10] (began recognizing as He spoke) Peter's voice. Acts 12:14 Her recognition was due to a presumed possession of a prior association with him.
        (2) Of those who recognized[11] Alexander was Jew. Acts 19:34 Those in the crowd were previously acquainted with the Jews and began recognizing Alexander as one.
        (3) The apostles recognized[12] the man at the "Beautiful gate". Acts 3:10 Those who saw the man walking and praising God began to perceive that he was the one who sat begging at the gate.
2. Some instances of an inability to recognize people.

[10] Aor. (ingressive) act. Par. ἐπιγνοῦσα
[11] Aor. (ingressive) Act. Part. ἐπιγνόντες
[12] Imper. Act. ind. Ἐπεγίνωσκον

a) Israel was unable to recognize[13] "Elijah". Matt. 17:12 They were aware of the facts about Elijah and his appearance as a forerunner to the Messiah but were unaware of the correlation to John the Baptist due to their blindness that prevented their understanding.
b) The form of the Lord was changed so that they could not recognize[14] HIm. Lk. 24:16 (The Lord opened their eyes to recognize[15] Him) Lk. 24:31

D. Epiginosko is used of an inability to recognize places.
   1. Those on the ship in which Paul was a prisoner didn't recognize[16] the area they were in. Acts 27:39; 28:1
   2. The Jews had a full experiential knowledge[17] of the apostles being associated with Jesus. cf. Acts 4:13

E. Epiginosko is used to note recognition of situations.
   1. The Lord recognized[18] the Scribes' and Pharisees' disdain for him. Mk. 2:8; Lk. 5:22 The Mark passage shows the place where experiential knowledge occurs is within the realm of the human spirit.[19]
   2. The Lord recognized that virtue had departed from Him. Mk. 5:30
   3. Those waiting for Zacharias understood[20] by his reaction that he had seen a vision. Lk. 1:22
   4. The woman with the alabaster box of ointment was acquainted[21] with the fact that Jesus was eating at one of the Pharisee's house. Lk. 7:37
   5. Pilate recognized[22] that Jesus was from Herod's district. Lk. 23:7
   6. The Sanhedrin perceived the apostles were with Jesus. Acts 4:13
   7. The brethren recognized[23] that Paul was about to be killed. Acts 9:30
   8. The captain recognized that Paul was a Roman. Acts 22:29 The experiential knowledge was the result of inquiry. Cf. Acts 22:24
   9. Tertullus implores Felex to gain an understanding of the accusations the Jews were making against Paul. Acts 24:8

F. Epiginosko is used to emphasize an ascertaining of the facts that lead to confidence in a matter.

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[13] Aor. Act. Ind. ἐπέγνωσαν
[14] ἐπιγνῶναι
[15] Aor. Act. Ind. ἐπέγνωσαν
[16] Imperfect Act. Ind. -- ἐπεγίνωσκον
[17] Imperfect. Active Ind. ἐπεγίνωσκόν
[18] Aor. Act Participle -- ἐπιγνοὺς
[19] Cf. Acts 19:21 (of purposing in spirit); Rom. 1:9 (place where God is served)
[20] Aor. Act. Int. (they realized by his reaction, based upon knowledge of this type of event, that he had seen a vision in the temple. Cf. Dan. 10:7
[21] Aor. Act. Participle -- ἐπιγνοῦσα
[22] Aor. Act. Participle -- ἐπιγνοὺς
[23] Aor. Act. Participle -- ἐπιγνοὺς

1. The investigation by Dr. Luke of the Lord was meant to bring Theophilus into a "perfect understanding". Luke 1:3-4
2. Epiginosko is important to those who considered themselves prophets in Corinth. 1st Co. 14:37
3. It is used concerning doctrine that the Corinthians understood. 2 Co. 1:13,14
    a) The Corinthians were acquainted with the facts of Paul's routine manner of life.
    b) The apostle desired that they would be acquainted with those facts till the end.
4. A full experiential knowledge of the grace of God is essential for growth. Col. 1:6
    a) The Colossians "heard"[24] concerning "the grace from God".
    b) As a result of a full experiential knowledge of that grace they were bearing fruit and growing.[25]

G. Epiginosko[26] is used to indicate the believer's being known by the Father. 2 Co. 6:9

H. The maturing saint is growing in a full experiential knowledge.
    1. A full experiential knowledge increases the believer's insight. Eph. 1:17
        a) The believer gains a spirit of *wisdom*, which is ***the proper application of knowledge***. cf. Rev. 13:18
        b) The believer gains a spirit of *revelation*, which is ***to unveil, or give insight into something***. cf. Phil. 3:15
    2. A full experiential knowledge *increases* the believer's agape. Phil. 1:9
        a) The believer's love increases toward the saints as he grows in a full experiential knowledge. Col. 1:4; 2 Thess. 1:3 cf. Phil. 2:25-30
        b) Love is manifest in the believer's tireless toil on behalf of other saints. 1 Thess. 1:2; Heb. 6:10
    3. A full experiential knowledge increases the believer's faith. Philemon 1:6
        a) The believer with a full experiential knowledge of every good thing given because of Christ will increase in faith. cf. 2 Co. 10:15
        b) The believer with a full experiential knowledge will produce more works because of increase of faith. cf. Ja. 2:21-26; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3
    4. A believer with a full experiential knowledge of *the truth* has freedom to eat anything to which he can give thanks. 1 Tim. 4:3
    5. A full experiential knowledge increases the believer's peace. 2 Pet. 1:2
        a) "*Multiplied*" as used here means ***a wish that something be spread out in abundance***. cf. Acts 6:7; 7:17
        b) Peace is an ***unruffled ness of mind***.
    6. The maturing saint desires to grow in an experiential knowledge of the resurrected Christ. Phil. 3:10

[24] The Colossians had an experiential knowledge of the grace of God through the gospel.
[25] Pres. m/p participle of καρποφορούμενον and αὐξανόμενον
[26] Pres. m/p participle used to note that the apostle was fully known to the right

a) The word "know" is a word that emphasizes an experiential knowledge of someone or something – to realize. cf. 1 Co. 2:14; 1 Thess. 3:5
b) Believers can grow to know, in their experience, things that one hadn't realized about the Lord before. cf. Eph. 3:19

7. The maturing saint desires to grow in an experiential knowledge of the power related to Christ's resurrection. Phil. 3:10
   a) The term "resurrection" as used in verse 10 is articular (used with an article).
   b) The articular usage of "resurrection" is used to denote the expected resurrection of the Jews to enter into the millennial kingdom. cf. Matt. 22:31; Lk. 20:35
   c) The articular usage is used of Christ rising from the dead. cf. Acts 2:31
   d) Believers are identified with Christ's resurrection through imputation. Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:12

8. The maturing saint desires to grow in an experiential knowledge of Christ's suffering. Phil. 3:10
   a) Christ suffers when the members of His body suffer.
      (1) There are physical sufferings that believers will experience that Christ shares.
         (a) The word for "sufferings" is *pathematon* – ***calamity; misfortune; pressures***.
         (b) Sufferings include tribulations (afflictions). cf. 2 Co. 1:5
      (2) Satan is the origin of many of the sufferings of the believer in Christ. cf. 1 Pet. 5:9
      (3) Much of the physical suffering for believers in the dispensation is related to the believer living in his position in Christ. cf. 2 Tim. 3:12
      (4) God allows "sufferings" in the lives of saints for further maturity. cf. Heb. 2:10

Immaturity hinders the believer from

III.

IV. MATURITY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE GRACE BELIEVER.

A. The apostle Paul urged believers to be borne on to maturity. Heb. 6:1
   1. The believer can be borne to maturity. Vs.1
      a) "*Therefore*" refers back to verses 5:14 of the need to "***strong meat belonging to them that are of full age (maturing)***".
      b) "*Bourne*" is from phero (pres. Pass. subj.) which describes the carrying by another from one location into another. Cf. Acts 4:34 (of things sold brought to the apostles); 5:2 (of proceeds from sale)
   2. Being borne on to maturity required leaving behind elementary principles. Vs.1

B. Maturity is illustrated in Heb. 5:14.
   1. The mature believer has habitually used his senses -- perception.

2. The result of the believer's habitual use is that his senses are exercised.
3. The result of the believer's exercised senses is he can make distinctions.

C. The Jewish believers of Hebrews were not maturing, but were babes – inarticulate babbler. Heb. 5:11; (ill. Eph. 4:14)
   1. Babes are blown about; agitated by waves (*kludon*) by every wind of doctrine. (ill. Ja. 1:6; Lk. 8:24)
   2. Babes are carried about; to be borne to and fro (*periphero*) by every wind of doctrine. (ill. Mk. 6:55)
   3. False teachers are the source of the spiritual instability of babies.
      a) False teachers use slight (*kubeia* – ***intentional fraud***) to deceive babes.
      b) False teachers use (***cleverness – trickery***) to deceive babes. (ill. Lk. 20:20-23; 2 Co. 11:3)

V. CONCLUSION