

BORN TO MATURE

The Necessity For Spiritual Maturation In The Dispensation of Grace

Part 2

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INTRODUCTION

I. SPIRITUAL MATURITY WAS NOT POSSIBLE UNDER LAW.

- A. Old Testament saints under law could not surpass baby status. Lk. 10:21; Gal. 4:1-5
- B. The basis of why the Old Testament saint could not mature is explained by the apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews. Heb. 7:11
 - 1. The apostle points to the law as an undermining factor in maturity.
 - a) Paul uses a *second-class* condition to undermine the Jewish believer's argument the law was of value in the Dispensation of Grace. Vs.11
 - b) The law was enacted upon the basis of the Levitical priesthood.v.s.11
 - c) The Law helped no one mature because it possessed only a shadow of the "good things" coming. Heb. 10:1a
 - (1) The word for *shadow*, ***an outline cast by the object which is the reality.***
 - (2) The "*good things*".
 - (3) It was not the *image* of the *matter*.
 - d) The *sacrifices* under law had limitations.
 - (1) The *same* sacrifices were offered continually every *year*. Vs. Heb. 10:1a
 - (2) The sacrifices offered could *never* make the ones *bringing* the offering mature.
 - e) Two proofs those sacrifices could never mature those bringing the offering:
 - (1) The need for bringing the offerings would have ceased. Heb. 10:2a

- (2) The ones serving as a priest would have had no more consciousness of sins – provided they were once cleansed. Vs.2b
 - (3) The sacrifices under law brought a **remembrance** of sins each year because the blood of bulls and goats could not **take away** sins. vs.3
 - f) Paul pointed out that the need for a priest to rise according to the order of Melchisedec proves the inability of the law to bring spiritual maturation. Vs.11
 - 2. The inability of the law to produce what God desired in men led to its being set aside for a new covenant. Vs.18
 - a) It was weak *astenes*, to be without strength (ill. Rom. 8:3).
 - b) It was *unprofitable, anopheles, useless, without a moral obligation, constraint, in that it had no ability to aid men to draw near to God and was unable to affect the justification of sinners before God.*
 - c) It could not bring maturity (perfection) to those under it. vs.19
- C. The Law could not bring about spiritual maturity. Heb. 7:19; Col. 1:25-29
- 1. The Levitical Priesthood was insufficient to provide for maturity.
 - 2. The high priest under law had to offer up sacrifices for their own sins. Heb. 5:3; 7:27-28
 - a) The high priest under law died. Heb. 7:23
 - b) The high priest under law could only enter into the holy of holies once a year to offer up sacrifices. Heb. 9:7
 - 3. The sacrifices offered under law could not cleanse the conscience of the Old Testament saint. Heb. 9:9; 10:1-2
 - a) The wrong conscience can affect spiritual maturation. (ill. 1 Co. 8:6-7; Rom. 13:5)
 - b) The believer under grace can have a good conscience. (ill. 1 Pet. 3:21)
 - 4. Paul emphatically states that the law made nothing mature. Heb. 7:19
 - 5. Paul later gives several reasons for the failure of the law to mature those under it.
 - a) The law was just a shadow of the good things to come, not the image. Heb. 10:1
 - b) The law could not purify the conscience of those under it. Heb. 9:9
- D. The life of the Old Testament saint was not on a trajectory towards maturity.
- 1. The Holy Spirit came upon saints in the Old Testament to perform a particular service.¹ The Holy Spirit would come and go upon saints.² Absence of the Holy Spirit is tantamount to being an unbeliever today.³
 - 2. The evidence from the Old Testament does not suggest the type of change in the human spirit of Old Testament saints that is in evidence at regeneration of New

¹ Judges 14:6,19; 15:14; 1st Sam. 11:6; 16:13;18:10

² 1st Sam. 16:14; cf. Ps. 51:11

³ Rom. 8:9

Testament saints. King David sought for renewal of his human spirit. The Hebrew word for “**renew is kun which means to make something steadfast.** According to Brown Driver and Briggs lexicon it means to be directed in a right way.”⁴

- a) The term pneumatikos which is used in Scripture to mean pertaining to or emanating from the spirit (human or Holy) is primarily a New Testament term. It is used only once in the Old Testament (Hosea 9:7) to emphasize a rational man
 - b) The New Testament usages emphasizes one who in the realm of their human spirit has Holy Spirit enablement to understand and to see matters taught by Him.⁵
 - c) Today, believers can be renewed in the spirit.⁶ Believers also can worship God there.⁷
3. The absence of the indwelling spirit in Old Testament saints is significant to understanding whether Old Testament saints were regenerated. The Scriptural record shows that indwelling of saints was not occurring as late as the Lord’s earthly ministry, The Lord promised the disciples in the upper room that the Spirit would come and indwell them after His departure.⁸
 4. The ministry that the Spirit is performing differs sharply from any other dispensation.
 - a) The Holy Spirit convicts the unsaved.⁹
 - b) The Holy Spirit teaches the believer.¹⁰
 - c) The Holy Spirit seals the believer.¹¹
 - d) The Holy Spirit fills the believer.¹²
 - e) The Holy Spirit intercedes for the believer.¹³

II. MATURITY WAS MADE POSSIBLE AS A RESULT OF THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BELIEVERS HAVE IN THIS DISPENSATION WITH THE SECOND PERSON OF THE GODHEAD.

A. The believer’s relationship with the Second Person was anticipated during the Lord’s earthly ministry. John 14:20

1. A new relationship was anticipated in the future as indicated by “*at that day*”. Vs.20

⁴ Ps. 51:10; 119:5 (“directed”)

⁵ 1st Co. 3:1; 2:13-15; Gal. 6:1; 1st Pet. 2:5

⁶ Eph. 4:23

⁷ Phil. 3:3; John 4:24

⁸ John 14:17; 16: 7:39

⁹ John 16:8-11

¹⁰ 1st John 2:27

¹¹ Eph. 4:30; 1:13

¹² Eph. 5:18

¹³ Rom. 8:26-27

- a) It is a phrase used in a particular time frame for particular events in the future.
 - (1) It is used of the Sheep and Goat judgment. Matt. 7:22
 - (2) It is used of the end of the world. Matt. 24:36
 - (3) It is used of the Millennial Kingdom. Mk. 14:25
 - (4) It is used of the Great White Throne judgment. Lk. 10:12
 - b) It is used specifically of the beginning of the Dispensation of Grace. John 16:23,26 (of the change in asking communication)
 - 2. The Lord prophesied a knowledge that would be possible that was not known at the time of His prophecy. Vs.20
 - a) *Know* is *ginosko* (fut. mid), indicating a **future experiential knowledge** concerning the relationship of the Father and the Son and the believers and the Son. cf. John 8:28(used of a future knowledge of the deity of the Lord); vs. 32 (used of a future knowledge of “the truth”)
 - b) Three things were prophesied to be known. Vs.20
 - (1) The Son’s relationship to the Father.
 - (2) The believers position in the Son.
 - (3) The Son’s indwelling of the believer.
- B. Spiritual maturity is made possible due to the relationship of believers to the Son. Col. 1:28
 - 1. The focus of admonition (warning) was maturity in Christ. vs.20
 - 2. The focus of doctrine for faith and practice (teaching) was maturity in Christ. vs.20
- C. Christ’s high priestly ministry is key to the believer’s maturity.
 - 1. Christ was made a priest through an ***oath***. vs. 20-21 (ill. Lk. 1:73; Acts 2:30; Heb. 6:16-17)
 - 2. Christ became a guarantee of a ***better covenant***. Vs. Heb. 7:22
 - 3. There are advantages to Christ’s priesthood.
 - a) His is an unchangeable priesthood due to the fact He will not die. vs. 23-24
 - b) He has an ability to keep believers saved. Heb. 7:25
 - (1) He keeps believers saved because He “ever liveth”.
 - (2) He keeps believers saved because He *intercedes* on behalf of the believer.
 - (3) He is *suited, to be fit for the* role of high priest. Vs.26
 - (4) He is *holy, devoted in things pertaining to God*.
 - (5) He is *harmless, without evil*.
 - (6) He is *undefiled, without stain or defilement, denotes real, ethical cleanliness*.
 - (7) He is *separated, apart from* sinners.
 - (8) He *resides* in the third heaven.
 - (9) He has been *perfected, brought to a goal* (in this instance, overcoming the obstacles set before Him - Heb. 5:9; 2:10)

4. Christ's high priestly ministry highlights the failings of the law to produce maturation in Old Testament saints. Heb. 7:27-28
 - a) He didn't have to offer daily sacrifices.
 - b) He didn't have to offer sacrifices for sin. (ill. John 8:46)
 - c) He didn't have the weaknesses of those under law.

III. THERE IS A SIMILARITY BETWEEN PHYSICAL MATURITY AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY. Phil. 3:11-15

A. Physical maturity is outlined in the apostle Paul's illustration of modes of revelation. cf. 1 Co. 13:11

1. The first stage of physical growth is childhood (*napios* – ***an inarticulate babbler, one who cannot articulate***).
 - a) *Napios* is used for physical growth in other places in Scripture. cf. Gal. 4:1
 - b) *Napios* is used negatively of a believer in the Dispensation of Grace. cf. 1 Co. 3; 1; Heb. 5:13
2. There are three characteristics seen in physical growth, development. 1 Co. 13:11
 - a) A child's speech reflects his age ("spake" is the Greek word *laleo* which means to verbalize).
 - b) A child's frame of mind reflects his age ("understand" is the Greek word for frame of mind or to reflectively use the mind).
 - c) A child's reasoning ability reflects his age ("thought" means to logically consider).

B. Spiritual maturity follows a similar path to physical growth.

1. A believer is expected to grow (increase) spiritually. 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18
2. God has given spiritual gifts to the Church to aid the believer's growth. Eph. 4:12-13
 - a) Immature believers are tossed to and fro by false doctrine.
 - b) Immature believers are tossed to and fro by deceivers.
3. The three characteristics of physical growth discussed in 1 Co. 13:11 is seen in the maturation process of the believer.
 - a) The speech of a maturing believer is reflective of his maturing. cf. 1 Pet. 3:10
 - b) The believer's frame of mind will be on accomplishing all God has called him for. cf. Phil. 3:15
 - c) The believer's reasoning ability reflects his maturation.
 - (1) He logically considers his state to be a continuous process. cf. Phil. 3:13
 - (2) He is able to consider things that edify. Phil. 4:8

IV. PATIENCE PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE MATURATION OF SAINTS. Ja. 1:4

A. Patience is a compound word that means to bear up under. Cf. Ja. 1:4

1. Patience is the bearing up under circumstances in life.

a) The word is a compound word comprised of:

- (1) The Greek preposition *hupo* -- to be under cf. Matt. 8:29 (of one being under authority)
- (2) The Greek word *meno* is used in Scripture to emphasize to remain in a state or a place; or to feel at ease in. cf. John 3:36 (of the wrath of God remaining over those who don't believe); 1st John 2:10 (of those feeling at ease in the light)

b) The word for patience is often translated by several different words in the verb and noun form in the A.V. (authorized version)

- (1) It is translated to endure 12 times.
- (2) It is translated "tarried" 1 time.
- (3) It is translated "suffer" 1 time.
- (4) It is translated "abode" 1 time.
- (5) It is translated "patience" 31 times (29 in the noun form).

c) Patience for believers in this dispensation is derived from hope. 1st Thess. 1:3

- (1) "Patience of hope" is an ablative of source and can be translated "patience from hope."
- (2) "Of the Lord Jesus Christ" is better translated concerning the Lord, Jesus Christ -- the one making all things possible in present tense salvation. cf. Rom. 5:1 (peace with God); 5:11 (boasting); 16:4 (grace); Gal. 6:14 (cross); 1st Thess. 5:9 (future salvation)
- (3) "In the sight of God and our Father" is a phrase that is used in the New Testament to emphasize God's ever present viewing of the things occurring among believers. cf. 1st Tim. 6:13 (of Paul's charge to Timothy); 1st Pet. 3:4 (of the behavior of a woman with a meek and quiet spirit)

d) Patience has been exhibited throughout Scripture.

- (1) Job exhibited patience (perf. act. part.) in trials. Ja. 5:11
- (2) The Lord exhibited patience (perf. act. part.) by His endurance of sinners. Heb. 12:3
- (3) The signs of an apostle were done by means of patience. 2 Co. 12:12
- (4) The apostle Paul exemplified patience for the elect's sake. 2 Tim. 2:10

e) Believers in this dispensation are admonished concerning patience.

- (1) Patience is something the believer adds to those things God has already provided. 2 Pet. 1:6

- (2) Paul admonishes Timothy to encourage the saints at Ephesus to pursue patience, among other things. 1st Tim. 6:11
 - (3) Paul admonished the believers at Rome to be patient (perf. act. part.) in tribulations. Rom. 12:12
- 2. Patience is linked in Scripture to tribulation, afflictions, necessities and distress. 2 Thess. 1:4; Rom. 12:12; Heb. 10:32,36
 - a) Tribulation is the Greek word *diogmos* which is the ***pursuits that occur against believers due to belief in the truth of the Word of God.*** cf. Matt. 13:21 (of those who suffered for preaching the Kingdom of Heaven); Acts 8:1 (of those in the early church).
 - b) Afflictions is the word *thlipsis* is the word for ***many-sided pressures*** that come due to life.
 - (1) Afflictions are a part of the world. John 16:33
 - (2) Afflictions are necessary to enter into the Kingdom of God. Acts 14:22
 - c) Necessities are *anagkais* -- “***(constraints) imposed either by circumstances, or by law of duty regarding one’s advantage, custom, argument.***” -- Joseph Thayer
 - (1) One can be compelled by others to do something. cf. Acts 26:11 (of the apostle Paul constrained the believers he persecuted to blaspheme).
 - (2) One can be compelled by circumstances. cf. Acts 28:19 (of the apostle Paul constrained to appeal his case due to the circumstances)
 - d) Distresses is the Greek word *stenochoria* -- “***narrowness of room, that is (figuratively) calamity.***” -- Strong’s lexicon

B. Patience presents the possibility of maturity. Vs. 4

V. GOD PROVIDED MYSTERIES FOR MATURING SAINTS IN THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE. Heb. 5:10-14

- A. The use of “mystery” is a term unique to New Testament doctrine.
 - 1. The word for mystery is the Greek word *musthion*.
 - a) The content of that which has not been known before but which has been revealed to an in-group or restricted constituency – Louw-Nida
 - b) The secret counsels which govern God in dealing with the righteous, which are hidden from ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly. – Joseph Thayer
 - 2. The word “mystery” occurs 27 times in the New Testament – three times in the gospels.
 - a) Three occurrences of the word “mystery” are in the gospels. Matt. 13:11; Lk. 8:10; Mk. 4:11

- b) The disciples were shown the mysteries of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom from the Heavens.
- B. The mysteries in the gospels pertained to what would happen to Christ's kingdoms after His departure back to heaven.
 - 1. The mysteries of the kingdom were hidden from the masses due to the hardness of their hearts. cf. Matt. 13:10-13
 - 2. The apostle Paul was a steward of the mysteries given to the Church. 1 Co. 4:1
 - a) The word "stewards" as used in this context means figuratively, one entrusted by God with spiritual authority and administration—Friberg Lexicon cf. Lk. 12:42
 - b) The apostle Paul revealed different mysteries to different churches throughout the course of his apostolic journeys. cf. Col. 1:26-28; 1 Co. 15:51
- C. There are two aspects to the mysteries revealed for maturation. Col. 1:26
 - 1. They were "hid" before its announcement.
 - a) The word "hid" is the Greek word *avpokekrummenon* - **knowledge that cannot be known except through divine revelation kept secret or hidden** – Friberg Lexicon (The passive voice denotes that God purposely held back the information in eternity past)
 - b) "From the ages" denotes the mysteries starting point began at an undefined period in eternity past. cf. Eph. 3:9
 - c) "From the generations" indicates that no people in the past knew about it.
 - 2. They have only been made manifest in this dispensation.
 - a) Paul uses an adverb of time "but now" to indicate the revelation to be at the time of his speaking. Col. 1:26a
 - b) It is made manifest to God's saints.
- D. The mysteries for maturation are contrasted with the wisdom of the age. 1 Co. 2:6
 - 1. An age is a period in God's decree in which God reveals something to his rational creatures by comparison or contrast.
 - a) The wisdom of the age uses application of knowledge that is inconsistent with God's plan and purposes. cf. 1 Co. 1:18-20; 3:18
 - b) The wisdom of the age places a focus upon how something is said over the substance of what's said. cf. 1 Co. 2:4-5
 - 2. The mysteries revealed in the New Testament are the wisdom from God – revelation that shows to the believer how God applies what He knows. 1 Co. 2:6
 - 3. Each of the mysteries reveals some insight into God's plan and purposes that He didn't reveal in times past. cf. Eph. 3:4 (Mystery of The Christ); 1 Co. 15:51 (Mystery of the rapture)
 - 4. God withheld the mysteries from "the princes of this world". 1 Co. 2:6-7
 - 5. The mysteries of the New Testament are for those who are maturing. 1 Co. 2:6

- a) “Them that are perfect” can be translated “mature ones”.
 - b) “Among” can be better understood “in the midst of”.
- 6. God ordained the mysteries of the New Testament before time began. 1 Co. 2:7
 - a) “Ordained” means the word for predestinate – meaning to mark off the boundaries of something. cf. Rom. 8:29
 - b) “Before the world” is more accurately translated “before the ages”.
- 7. The glorification of believers was the reason for God’s ordaining of the mysteries. 1 Co. 2:7
 - a) God has desires that believers obtain a quality of glory. cf. Rom. 9:23; Heb. 2:10
 - b) The believer obtains glory as he is continually transformed into the image of Christ from one quality of glory into another. cf. 2 Co. 3:18
- E. Paul revealed mysteries in this dispensation that are for maturing saints.
 - 1. A mystery Dispensation. Eph. 3:4
 - 2. A mystery concerning God’s plan for Israel. Rom. 11:25
 - 3. A mystery gospel for stabilizing believers. Rom. 16:25
 - 4. The rapture. 1st Co. 15:51
 - 5. The mystery concerning God’s desirous will. Eph. 1:9
 - 6. The mystery of “the Christ”. Eph. 3:3-4; Col. 4:3
 - 7. The mystery of the church as the Bride of Christ. Eph. 5:32
 - 8. The mystery of the indwelling Christ. Col. 1:26-27
 - 9. The mystery of “the faith”, 1st Tim. 3:9
 - 10. The mystery of godliness. 1st Tim. 3:16
 - 11. The mystery of lawlessness. 2 Thess. 2:6-7
 - 12. The mystery of “the Christ” as related to the Father. Col. 2:2-3

VI. CHARACTERISTICS OF MATURING SAINTS ARE OUTLINED IN SCRIPTURE.

- A. A maturing saint can share in common Christ’s suffering.
 - 1. “*Sharing in common*” is the Greek word *koinwnian* – ***an association involving close mutual relations and involvement, close association*** – Louw-Nida cf. 2 Co. 6:14
 - 2. Believer’s who suffer for Christ share in common this suffering with saints around the world. cf. 1 Pet. 5:9
- B. The maturing saint desires conformity to Christ’s death. Phil. 3:10
 - 1. “*Death*” as used in this context is the Greek word *qanato* which focuses upon the separation of the soul from the body – to be without animation of life. cf. 1 Pet. 3:18
 - 2. Believers are baptized into the death of Christ at salvation. Rom. 6:3
 - 3. Conformity to Christ’s death allows for the effects of being identified together with Christ’s death to change the believer from the inside out.

- a) The term *being made conformable* means to take on the same form as, share the likeness of – United Bible Society
- b) The believer takes on the same form of Christ's death by seeing himself as having been separated from his old man through the death of Christ. Rom. 6:6-8; cf. Gal. 2:20

C. He sees himself/herself in a perpetual state of maturation.

1. The maturing saint has the attitude of conformity to the resurrection from the dead.
 - a) The word for dead as used in this verse of Philippians means to be without animation of life. cf. Acts 20:9
 - b) Believers have an expectation of physical and spiritual resurrection from the dead.
 - (1) Believers are assured of physical resurrection from the dead. 1 Co. 15:42, 52
 - (2) Believers are assured of spiritual resurrection from the dead. Eph. 2:5
2. The resurrection Paul desired to "attain" is that which imputes the believer to be raised out from among the spiritually dead.
 - a) Believers are told to present selves as one raised out from the dead. Rom. 6:13
 - b) Carnality can inhibit a believer from consistently living as one who has been raised from among those who are spiritual dead. cf. Eph. 5:14
3. Paul did not see attaining to the "resurrection of the dead" as the pathway to maturity. Phil. 3:12
 - a) The statement "not as though I had already attained" emphasizes the fact that living as one who reached the "resurrection of the dead" does not mean that the maturation process is complete.
 - (1) The word "already" is the term *hde* to reach a destination before an expected time. Cf. Matt. 3:10; 5:28
 - (2) "Attained" is the word *elabon* – which means to take up; to take in hand – Sheldon Green cf. Gal. 2:6; 3:2
 - (a) The use of the imperfect voice emphasizes a completed action of receiving something. cf. Heb. 11:35
 - (b) Paul had not attained to the "resurrection of the dead" once and for all.
 - b) The maturing saint understands that maturity is relative and incomplete in this life.
 - (1) The word for maturity, *teleoi* means **complete, perfect; (1) with its chief component as totality, as opposed to partial or limited; (a) of things in full measure, undivided, complete, entire** – Friberg Lexicon cf. Phil. 3:12

- (2) Proof that the apostle Paul hadn't thought that he'd arrived was that he continued pursuit of apprehending all that he'd been apprehended for by Christ Jesus.
- (a) Paul pursued after the mark -- ***followed with haste, and presumably with intensity of effort, in order to catch up with, for friendly or hostile purpose*** -- Louw-Nida cf. Heb. 12:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 1 Thess. 5:15
 - (b) The focus of Paul's pursuit is to "***apprehend***" -- ***to acquire, with the implication of significant effort - to acquire, to attain, to obtain, to take.*** -- Louw-Nida cf. 1 Co. 9:24; Mk. 9:18
 - (i) The results of Paul's pursuit are seen in his focus.
 - (a) Paul was desirously eager to be well pleasing to God. 2 Co. 5:10-11
 - (b) Paul was able to contain his bodily appetites in order to accomplish God's goal for him. 1 Co. 9:24-27
 - (ii) Paul was confident of the direction of his life no matter what he was facing. Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:7-8
- c) The attitude of the maturing saint is one that rejects all human effort.
- (1) Paul, on the one hand, learned to reject human effort of the past - "forgetting" those things behind.
 - (a) The word "forgetting" is *epilanthanomenos*-- ***neglect, disregard, care nothing for; escape notice, be overlooked or*** – Freiberg Lexicon. cf. Heb. 13:2; 2 Pet. 3:8
 - (b) The things that Paul was forgetting was the things "behind" are the Greek word *opiso* ***back, behind, after, afterwards; of place: things that are behind; of time.*** Cf. Lk. 9:62; 17:31
 - (2) Paul, on the other hand, learned to embrace the provisions of grace that would make him all that God wanted him to be -- *reaching out* (*epekteinomenos* --***to reach out or stretch out toward some goal -; to reach out, to stretch toward used figuratively to suggest intense effort as well as firm purpose.*** Louw-Nida) cf. Acts 26:7
 - (a) The object "reached out" for "the things which are before".
 - (b) "Things" is a neuter article used to emphasize inanimate things – the things laid out for the believer to accomplish. cf. 1 Co. 14:7; 2:9; Eph. 1:10

- (c) “Before” is a word used to emphasize in the presence of or in front of. cf. John 1:15, 30

D. He is able to exercise the faculties of his mind. Heb. 5:14

1. The word Paul uses for perception is *aisthētērion* which carries the meaning to have the capacity to perceive clearly and hence to understand the real nature of something –Louw-Nida
 - a) The word is used in the Septuagint to mean perception, not only by the senses but also by the **intellect; cognition, discernment** – Joseph Thayer cf. Prov. 1:22; 2:10
 - b) The Hebrew word for perception is *da`ath* which is **knowledge, perception, skill; discernment, understanding, wisdom**. – UBS Prov.1:22
 - (1) “Fools” are *Keciyl* -- **stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one**. --UBS
 - (2) “Fools” hate discernment, perception.
 - (3) “Da`ath” is seen by Solomon as being a pleasure for the soul.
 - (4) “Da`ath” is used with the word “wisdom” several times in Scripture.
 - (a) It is used in the book of Job. Job. 15:2
 - (b) It is used together in the book of Proverbs. Prov. 15:2
 - c) The word for “perception” is used in the New Testament just three times.
 - (1) It is used in Luke to emphasize a failure to comprehend spiritual information given. Lk. 9:45
 - (2) It is used to indicate the importance of perception to agape love. Phil. 1:9
 - (3) It is used to emphasize how believers mature. Heb. 5:14
 - d) The use of “strong meat” aids in the exercising of the perceptions of the mind. Heb. 5:14
 - (1) A. The word “use” (*exin* -- *hexis*) is a word used in Scripture to denote “practice”.
 - (2) Friberg Lexicon describes it as **a condition of body or mind acquired through practice skill; in the NT practice, exercise, doing again and again**.
 - (3) Joseph Thayer in his Greek lexicon states **it is a habit, whether of body or of mind; a power acquired by custom, practice, use**.
 - (4) Hermann Green defines the word as **a condition of body or mind, strictly, as resulting from practice; habitude**.
 - (5) “Hexis” occurs just once in the New Testament.
 - e) The word *through* is a key to understanding the process of maturity.
 - (1) The word “through” is the Greek preposition *dia* which means the intermediate agency by which something occurs – the cause.
 - (2) The thing they’re exercising their perception on is the use of *strong meat*.

- (a) *Strong* is pertaining to being solid or firm in contrast with that which is soft or liquid, solid, firm. – Louw-Nida
 - (b) “*Meat*” is better translated “food” as it is in other areas of Scripture.
 - (i) It is used of physical food in Scripture. cf. Acts 27:36; 2:46
 - (ii) It is used with the adjective “strong” only two times in Scripture. cf. Heb. 5:12
 - (3) *Strong meat* is correlated with deeper truths of the word of God. cf. 1 Co. 2:6; Heb. 6:1
- f) Many saints continue to feed upon the “*milk*” of the Word of God. cf. Heb. 6:1
 - (1) “*Milk*” in Scripture is used to emphasize spiritual nourishment through elementary doctrinal instruction. – Friberg Lexicon
 - (2) Paul lists some of the elementary doctrines in Chapter 6 of the book of Hebrews, calling them, literally, “the beginnings of the Christ”. Heb. 6:1-2
- g) *Exercising* is the English word for gymnastics which is used for the putting of something through a workout in order to make it stronger or to keep conditioned.
 - (1) The body can be put through a workout to keep it conditioned. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:8
 - (2) The immaterial heart of man can be exercised to do evil. cf. 2 Pet. 2:14
- 2. Maturing believers exercise the perception of their minds to discernment of good and evil.
 - (1) Good is the word *kalos* is that which is outwardly acknowledged to be beneficial. cf. Matt. 5:16; 2 Co. 8:21
 - (a) That which is outwardly beneficial is made possible by that which is inwardly good. Cf. Matt. 7:17
 - (b) That which is good cannot produce that which is evil. cf. Matt. 7:18
 - (2) Evil is the word *kakos* – that which is singularly lacking in character for one’s own benefit.
 - (a) Speech is seen as evil in the New Testament. cf. Acts 23:5; 3 John 1:10-11; 1 Pet. 3:10
 - (b) Love of money is seen as a root of all that is evil. 1 Tim. 6:10
 - (c) Teachers perpetuating law teaching over grace is seen as evil. Phil. 3:2
 - (d) Asking God for something for consumption upon one’s pleasures is seen as evil. Ja. 4:3

- E. A maturing saint is able to come to the aid of a weaker brother. 2 Thess. 3:6-15
1. One who is a “weak” believer is ***one who is without spiritual strength. He doesn’t know or understand how to overcome his spiritual enemies and, consequently, can be overwhelmed by the circumstances brought on by them.***
 - a) There are two types of weaknesses prominent in Scripture.
 - (1) Some are weak because of a lack of physical strength. cf. 2 Tim. 4:20; Acts 19:12
 - (2) Some are weak because of a lack of spiritual strength. cf. Rom. 5:6; 2 Co. 11:29
 - b) Those mature believers are to “receive” those who are weak in the faith.
 - (1) ***To “receive” those who are weak in the faith is to accept someone who doesn’t have the strength to overcome his spiritual enemies, showing appreciation for them on the basis of their common position in Christ.*** cf. Rom. 14:2
 - (2) Twice in the New Testament, the apostle Paul encourages believers to receive weak believers. cf. Rom. 14:1
 - c) Maturing believers ought to “bear” with those believers who are weak.
 - (1) *Bearing with someone means that you help them to carry a load in order that they might get relief.*
 - (2) The word for “bear” is illustrated in the New Testament. cf. Acts 3:2; Gal. 6:2
 - d) Believers are instructed to “support” the weak.
 - (1) To “support” ***someone who is weak is to metaphorically grasp one with the intent of not letting go, to hold on to; to be devoted to.*** cf. Acts 20:35
 - (2) The book of 1st Thessalonians is the only time “support” is used concerning the weak, but it is used elsewhere in Scripture of being devoted to something. Matt. 6:24; Tit. 1:9
 2. Believers have a responsibility to “comfort” the feeble-minded. 1 Thess. 5:14
 - a) One who is “feeble-minded” is one who ***has limited or diminished motivation for the attainment of some goal - ‘fainthearted, discouraged,*** -- Louw-Nida
 - b) The word for “comfort” is a compound word that literally means ***to speak alongside of one presumably for the purpose of bringing them into remembrance of truth that can ease their emotional distress.*** cf. John 11:19,31; 1 Thess. 2:12
 3. Bear one another’s *burdens* – ***events or circumstances that weigh one down.*** Gal. 6:2 cf. 2 Co. 1:8
- F. A maturing saint is able to properly assist a believer in sin.
1. There are many different ways a believer can struggle with sin.
 - a) Some believers can be hardened to sin. cf. Heb. 3:13
 - b) Some believers can be on the verge of sinning. Gal. 6:1

- c) Some believers can be carnal because of sin. 1 Co. 3:1
- 2. Believers are to exhort one another daily in order that no one becomes hardened by the deceitfulness of the sin nature. cf. Heb. 3:13
- 3. Spiritual believers are instructed to “*restore*” those who are in a fault. Gal. 6:1
 - a) A “*fault*” is different from sin in that the one involved in it is ***contemplating sinning***, but has yet to sin. cf. Eph. 2:2; Rom. 5:15
 - b) To “*restore*” someone is ***to adjust them back into place*** before he commits an act of sin. cf. Eph. 4:12, 21
- 4. Jude gives two scenarios to dealing with a brother in sin. Jude 22-23
 - a) Show mercy to those “*wavering*”—***those who doubt, don’t live by faith and consequently fall into sin and are suffering as a result of their sin.*** cf. Ja. 1:6; Rom. 14:23
 - b) There are several things the believer is to consider as he deals with someone in sin. Vs.23
 - (1) “*Pull out from the fire*” presumes that these are behaving like the unsaved and thereby are in danger of the same judgment they would receive.
 - (2) The believer is to have a “hatred” (silent) for the “*garments spotted by the flesh*” – the things associated with sin brought on by the sin nature.
 - (3) The believer is to relate to the sinning believer “*in fear*” – ***a dread of displeasing God in his dealing with the one in sin.*** cf. 1 Pet. 3:15
- G. Believers have a responsibility to judge those who engage in public sins in the church. 1 Co. 5:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:20
- H. A maturing saint can properly respond to believers who are unruly.
 - 1. Unruly saints are ones who refuse to march in step with the standard of behavior laid down by Scripture. cf. 2 Thess. 3:6,11
 - 2. Believers should admonish those who are out of order. 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:15
 - a) “Admonish means **to place before someone the facts about their behavior; to warn someone.** cf. Acts 20:31 1 Co. 10:11; Tit. 1:10
 - b) A believer is instructed to “*refuse*” (**to ask from, beg off from**) a heretic after two admonitions. Tit. 3:10 cf. Acts 25:11; 1st Tim. 5:11
 - 3. Separation may be necessary for believers who teach false doctrine.
 - a) Believers are to “*turn away*” (**to be absent from**) from those who “deny the power” of godliness. 2Tim. 3:5 cf. Phil. 2:12

- b) Believers are told to “*withdraw*” (**to excite to revolt, to make standoff, cause to withdraw, to remove** – Louw-Nida) from ones who teach gain is godliness. 1 Tim. 6:5 cf. Lk. 8:13
 - c) Believers are told to “*avoid*” (**purposely to avoid association with someone – 'to shun, to avoid, to keep away from, to have nothing to do with** – Louw-Nida) those who cause doctrinal divisions that are not according to Scripture. Rom. 16:17
 - 4. Those who are out of line need to be “*disciplined*” (**to punish, with the implication of causing people to suffer what they deserve** -- Louw-Nida). 2 Co. 2:6 cf. 1 Co. 5:1-3; Heb. 10:29
 - 5. Two things are said to be necessary in dealing with those who oppose Grace truth.
 - a) Those who oppose Grace truth are to be “*refuted*” (**speak against something or someone - 'to oppose, to speak in opposition to.** – Louw-Nida). Tit. 1:9; cf. Acts 13:45
 - b) Those who oppose Grace truth are to be “*rebuked*” (**in the NT, generally as showing someone that he has done something wrong and summoning him to repent bring to light, expose** – Friberg Lexicon) cf. Ja. 2:9; Tit. 1:13; Eph. 5:11
 - 6. An elder believer is to be “*entreated*” 1 Tim. 5:1
- I. A maturing believer will be abiding.
 - 1. Abiding is from the Greek word “*meno*” which means **to stay in a location; to continue or to be at ease in.** -- K.D.J.
 - 2. Abiding is central to maturity.
 - a) It cements the maturing believer to the true source of power.
 - (1) The use of the aor. Mid. “Abide in me”, indicates the maturing believer will remain settled for their own benefit in the One who is the source of power.
 - (2) The use of the aor. Subj. “except ye abide in me” notes the potentiality of bearing fruit to the one abiding.
 - b) It affects the believer’s communication with the Father (third class conditional use of *meno*). John 15:7
 - c) It affects the believer’s walk. 1st John 2:6
 - (1) “Walk” is to take steps in a certain direction. Cf. Lk. 20:46 (of the Scribes); Acts 21:21 (of walking after the customs of Moses); 1st Thess. 4:1 (of believers)
 - (2) “As He walked”, the far demonstrative pronoun goes back to verse 5 concerning the Son.
 - d) It affects the believer’s confidence. 1st John 2:28
 - e) It affects fellowship with other believers. 1st John 1:7
- J. A maturing believer will be sharing in common with the Father.

1. “Fellowship” is from koinonia which is used in the New Testament of “sharing in common”. Cf. 1st John 1:6
2. The Son makes it possible. 1st Co. 1:9
3. Fellowship with the Father makes possible fellowship with other believers. 1st John 1:3

VII. HINDRANCES TO MATURITY CAN HALT THE MATURATION OF A BELIEVER.

- A. The *age* is a significant culprit in thwarting maturity in the life of a believer.
 1. An age is a period in God’s program when He is demonstrating things to rational creatures (human or spirit beings) by comparison or contrast.
 2. The activities of an age can offer an alternative to God’s plan and purposes.
 - a) Seen in Satan offering an alternative to fellowship with God.
 - b) Seen in Cain’s offering of an alternative to God’s provision of worship.
 - c) Seen in Jannes and Jombres offering an alternative to God’s power.
 - d) Seen in the Corinthians being offered an alternative to grace.
 3. The legal age proved to be a problem for the Roman believers.
 4. The present evil age undermined the spiritual growth of the Corinthians.
- B. Law is a consistent hindrance to spiritual maturity. Gal. 5:1-4
- C. Factual knowledge for spiritual maturity.
- D. Philosophy and traditions are a hindrance to spiritual maturity. Col. 2:8
- E. Carnality is the most significant impediment to maturity.
 1. The Jewish believers in Paul’s audience could not digest the teaching concerning Melchisedec due to their spiritual condition. Heb. 5:11-14
 - a) They came to be dull (nothros) of hearing. Vs.11
 - b) They were in need of being taught the ABC’s of the Christian life. Vs.12
 - c) They came to be in need of milk (galaktos) not solid food.
 - (1) Paul notes that those who use milk are unskillful in the word pertaining to righteousness.
 - (2) Paul notes that those in need of milk are babes (napios)
 2. The doctrine concerning Melchisedec is strong meat that cannot be used with babes.
 - a) Strong meat is for those who are maturing.
 - b) The reason strong meat is for the maturing:
 - (1) Maturing ones have exercised their senses (asthenia)
 - (2) Maturing ones can make distinctions between good (kalos) and evil (kakos)

VIII. CONCLUSION

Believers have a lot of decisions to make in living the Christian Life. Many of those decisions will involve one's relationship to other believers. Recognizing the state of another believer is very important. By recognizing the condition of a believer, a maturing saint can thereby understand admonitions from Scripture concerning how to relate to saints in various stages. The purpose of relating to troubled believers in this way is to aid the believer to become all that God has for the believer to be.