

1 Thess 1:2-10
CBBC
5/25/2025

Introduction—How do you measure progress? Who gets to measure progress? What does maturity look like?

I. Maturing believers obey for the right reasons. (vs. 2-3)

They have been praying constantly for Thessalonian believers. They have been remembering their testimony. They are remembering their works, but these are works that are not merit-based. They are not works that are done with a desire to earn their way into God's favor or the favor of others. These are not works that add to someone's account. Rather, these are works that spring from our faith. We ask ourselves the question, "Did I really believe when I came to Christ? Was it the right faith?" James answers that by saying, "True faith shows itself by its works."

There is a difference between works that flow from merit and works that flow from faith. The fountain of merit is always polluted with pride and self-interest. They are flawed from the get-go. That water is always polluted. It kills rather than gives life. Whatever is not of faith is sin. Romans 14:23 It will never accomplish what it wants to.

The works that come from faith in Christ will always be pleasing to God. First of all, because the faith was placed in there by God as part of our salvation. Second, the works done because of our faith have this profound, God-pleasing humility at their foundation. We know that we are incapable of adding any merit, so works that come from faith become an act of worship. The works of someone who does so because of their faith in Christ will be different than one who is trying to earn salvation with their works.

He talks about labor that comes from love. The term “labor” here is different in that suffering is tied into it. This is the hardness, the struggle that we face as believers. We will face that. Part of the call to come to Christ is the call to suffer. “Take up your cross and follow me.” We have been given the privilege not only to know Christ, but to suffer for Him. Phil 1:29 Here, suffering means the hardship that comes about when we follow Christ. We have the hostility of the Devil, of course. We have the hostility of the world around us. We have the hostility of our own soul, our sinful nature, as we struggle against sin, as we try to drill down to self-control, or any of the fruits of the Spirit.

But we continue to do so, because we have this supernatural love that enables us to love the Lord our God with all of our heart and soul and mind, and we have this love for others, to love them as we love ourselves. We labor in spite of the pain that obedience brings us.

And to be steadfast or to show endurance. To do that work and that labor again and again and again. You do so because you have this hope, that certainty that when you die, because death is inevitable, unless Christ comes first, you will be with our Lord, and you will be blessed forever in His presence, and every struggle we went through will be more than compensated, and all tears will be wiped away.

Maturity, you have believers in motion.

People of the Gospel. (verses 4-5) Paul then says, “Hey, I know you guys are loved by God, and that means that you are chosen as believers. They have been chosen for salvation. How can He tell that? They just didn’t confess the truth of what was said, but the power of the Holy Spirit was working among the people. This could mean that certain sign gifts were apparent. In the beginning days of the church, when

new groups came to Christ, you would see certain sign gifts, confirming the truth of the Gospel and even giving more revelation because Scripture wasn't completed yet. It also says that conviction was obvious among the Thessalonians. There was full assurance and certainty that this was the truth. Mature believers know that the Gospel is everything. It is the key and the door. Gospel-centered does not mean that everything should be about the Gospel, but rather the Gospel is the only way in which we can clearly see everything else and where it belongs. John 14:6 says, "I am the way, the truth, and the Life; no man comes to the Father but by me." Mature believers understand the power of the Gospel to transform our hearts, our minds, and our relationships. Mature believers operate under the assumption that nothing comes close to bringing about necessary change other than Christ.

Growing believers recognize mature believers. Game knows game.. (5 b-7) The Thessalonians were aware of Paul's and his group's testimony. They looked at them, and they took Paul's admonition to heart. "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." And they looked at mature believers and said, "I want to look like that." And in doing so, they were also imitating God.

This is connected directly with them receiving the Word. They heard the Word being preached to them. They loved what they heard. They wanted to do it. So, they look to God as an example, and by extension, they look to those who followed after God. How do they live?

Verse 7 tells us the obvious. If you had growing Christians look at Christians who were more mature and then would imitate them to become more like Christ, then the growing Christians would become an example to other Christians who want to grow.

In Galatians 6:4-5, we are told not to compare ourselves with one another. That is a comparison of works. how do my works measure up with someone else? Imitation is different than comparison. Christ-centered imitation is based on the idea that in the presence of counsellors, there is safety. So, you look to see how other people are following Christ, see what is closest to what God commands, and you imitate while at the same time adapting it to yourself and your circumstances. How many spiritual disciplines do we learn through imitation? Comparison, which we are not supposed to do, is to compare the scope and effectiveness of our obedience.

In the verses I Thess 1:8, **maturing believers are evangelistic**. Paul loves the fact that the Gospel is not only being talked about in Macedonia and Achaia, but its gone forth everywhere, so that when Paul gets there, there is no need for him and his guys to proclaim the Gospel because the Thessalonians have done the work already. Part of the Gospel message itself understands that when we come to Christ we agree that we will tell others that they will also follow Christ. The Thessalonian church took this seriously, and they were doing their own local evangelistic work. One cannot think that they are maturing in Christ if they are not actively praying and pursuing personal evangelism. It will never look the same between two believers. Everyone is going to do it in their own way. Growing believers pursue evangelism.

Maturing believers have visible growth. verses 9-10. The Thessalonian believers had the reputation among others in the area that when the Gospel came to them, they turned from idols, they turned from sin, and they turned to serve the living and true God. And they waited for His Son to come back, as He was Jesus, who would deliver them from the wrath to come.

Everyone has a testimony as to what is most important to them. For the believer, we understand that our testimony is meant to give glory to God, to point out why God should be worshipped. It also serves as a teaching tool. It's heavily nuanced, and there is so much overlap, but our lives teach other believers what to do and what not to do.

We don't determine whether we are mature. It is the community that does so. Now, this is all things being equal. It presupposes that the community is made up of believers, many of whom are growing in Christ. There is a mixed multitude. There are immature believers. But I am not the best judge as to whether I am mature. It is the believers around me. It is our family, friends, and church community. They are not always right, but they will be right more often than we are.

What is our public testimony? We all have one. We constantly tell people what we love and what we are indifferent to. Our testimony and maturity cannot be separated. Maturity is something that is dynamic and grows, and is transformational. Church attendance is necessary for our testimony, but does it say enough? When we look at the Thessalonian church, they had this vibrant, exciting testimony of a group of believers. (not the elders or deacons)

Would the people around you say that you are growing in Christ?