



Date: 01-11-2026

Text: Philippians 2:1-18 NLT

Sermon Title: Joy That Grows Up

Big Idea: The joy of Christian maturity is revealed in how we live, serve, and pursue obedience together as the family of God.

The tension: What does joyful Christian maturity actually look like when lived out together?

So, the question becomes:

Is there a way to grow in joy without growing in pride—or burning out—or tearing each other apart?

Philippians 2:1–11 NLT

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same

attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Notes:

Mature Joy Grows Out of Gospel Unity

The _____: “Be of the Same Mind”

What _____ Looks Like Practically:

The _____: Christ Himself

Philippians 2:12–18 NLT

Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless. But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.

Notes:

Mature Joy Grows Through _____ Living

“_____ Out Your Salvation”

The _____ of Obedience Matters

Question to ask ourselves:

1. Where is God inviting you to grow up?

And you don't do this alone
God supplies the desire, God supplies the strength, but you must choose obedience.

Life Group Discussion

1. Get to Know You

What's something you've grown out of as you've gotten older (a habit, preference, or attitude)? When you think of "maturity," what's the first word or image that comes to mind?

2. Digging Deeper

A. Gospel Unity Shaped by the Mind of Christ (Philippians 2:1–11)

Why does Paul begin with shared spiritual realities rather than commands? How does Paul define unity, humility, & "having the same mind"? How does Christ's humility in verses 6–11 set the pattern for Christian living?

(Optional Cross-References: John 13:3–5 | Romans 15:5–6)

B. Obedience as the Pathway to Joyful Maturity (*Philippians 2:12–18*)

What does “work out your salvation” mean—and what does it not mean?

Why does Paul connect obedience with attitude (complaining and arguing)?

(Optional Cross-References: Ezekiel 36:26–27 | Romans 12:1)

3. Living It Out

Is there an area where God may be calling you to greater obedience—not to earn His favor, but because He is at work in you? How might your attitude (words, complaints, tone) be affecting your witness?

MATURE [Gk. *téleios*—‘complete, perfect’] (1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; He. 5:14); AV PERFECT, FULL AGE, MEN, PERFECTION; NEB also RIPE, GROWN UP, GROWN MEN; [*telesphoréō*—‘bear fruit to maturity’] (Lk. 8:14); AV PERFECTION; MATURITY [*téleios*] (He. 6:1); AV PERFECTION. See *also* PERFECT.

Maturity results from a full knowledge of the apostolic teaching about Christ and salvation and from correct application of this teaching to everyday life. Thus maturity is the Church’s goal for its members.

Although the concept of Christian maturity occurs mainly in the Epistles, Luke contains an important illustration—the parable of the Sower (8:14). Here Jesus tells of optimum spiritual growth, from initial reception of the gospel to steadfast discipleship, and warns that those who become overly concerned with their material goods and other affairs of this present age will

not bear mature “fruit,” i.e., a life of righteous behavior and Christian endeavor.

A child-adult metaphor is the basis of Paul’s exhortations to mature conduct in 1 Cor. 2:6; 3:1–3 and in 14:20. These passages must be understood in relation to the various problems in the Corinthian church.

In 2:6, 10–12 Paul speaks of Christian wisdom, i.e., the mystery of salvation, formerly hidden but now revealed to the Christian community by the Spirit of God. This wisdom is from God and is not the worldly rhetoric popular among the Corinthians (1:20; 3:18). The “mature” of 2:6 are those who competently discern the doctrinal and spiritual matters of the Christian life. The “mature” and the “spiritual” person (2:15) are counterparts.

Because some of the church members are divisive, Paul addresses the Corinthians as “people of the flesh” (*sárkinoi*) as opposed to “spiritual people” (*pneumatikoí*) in 3:1. The actions of the Corinthians are typical of “babes” (*nēpioi*) in Christ. They are no longer “natural” people (RSV mg, 2:14), for they have believed in Christ and have been incorporated into His body. But neither are they “spiritual” people, for they are squabbling about leadership in their church (1:12; 3:1–4). Hence they are immature, and Paul addresses them as such. The implication of his argument is that mature Christians will not glory in various teachers such as Paul and Apollos but instead will discern that church growth ultimately comes from God (3:6) and that the Church is built by Him (v 9).

The child-adult metaphor in 1 Cor. 14:20 also concerns proper conduct. The Corinthians’ preoccupation with unintelligible ecstatic speech had resulted in confusion in church worship. Paul repeatedly points out the value of speech that is understood (14:3–5, 9, 12, 15, etc.), offering several simple analogies to illustrate his reasoning (vv 7f, 10f, 23). The direct appeal for maturity (v 20) calls for agreement with these simple truths. The Corinthians are not immature in the sense that they lack Christian knowledge. Rather, their practical application of the knowledge they possess is defective. Behavior that is immature by the standards of apostolic doctrine is the usual target of Paul’s argument. This is made clear by his statement, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways” (13:11). Similar is his closing exhortation in 16:13 to “be manly” (*andρίζεσθε*; RSV “be courageous”; NEB “be valiant”; cf. Shep. Herm. Vis i.4.3).

In similar fashion the author of Hebrews chides his readers for being immature children, still living on milk. In contrast, those who eat “solid food” are the mature, who are described as able “to distinguish good from evil” (He. 5:12–14).

Paul speaks of those who have attained maturity (1 Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15) and describes his effort to attain conformity with Christ in his ministry (Phil. 3:11–15). But an absolute state of maturity is not possible in this present evil age, and maturity nowhere in the NT implies sinless perfection (cf. 1 Jn. 1:8–10).

In Colossians Paul makes clear that his objective and that of those who minister with him is to bring every member of the believing community to maturity (1:28). This is to be brought about by the proclamation of Christ, by admonition, and by teaching all that Christian salvation involves. This active, thorough instruction intends to instill in every Christian an “assured understanding” of Christ, God’s mystery (2:2). The doctrinal knowledge necessary for maturity is not like the intellectual mastery of esoteric formulas that Gnosticism proclaimed as the way to salvation. Rather, this knowledge is a developing of the believer’s understanding of Christian truth and is thoroughly christocentric (2:3, 6, 9f), because the believer matures “in Christ” (1:28). Christian knowledge is not only intellectual but also experiential and personal. The believer “walks” in Christ and is “rooted” and “built up” in Him (2:6f.). Paul certainly has in mind an ongoing process of growth through daily Christian experience and assimilation of teaching. Maturity will prevent deception by erroneous teachers who promise spiritual maturity and perfection through philosophical and other worldly means (vv 8–23).

Ephesians, too, presents maturity as an antidote to the popular religious speculation that threatened to undermine the teaching of the apostles. Mature Christians will not be like children, who are easily deceived and swayed by new ideas (4:14). As in Philippians, maturity is a goal desired for the body of Christ and is realized through those who teach and proclaim Him. This cooperative ministering will result in the “perfecting” (*katartismós*) of the saints, the development of yet more ministerial activity, and the building up of the body of Christ (v 12). The Church will then be unified in faith and mature in “the knowledge of the Son of God” (v 13). Essential to Paul’s concept of growth here is Christian love (*agápē*, vv 15f.). As in Col. 2:6f, spiritual growth is not exclusively intellectual but also results from the personal experience of being in Christ.

It is significant that in the NT the idea of growth into maturity is in each instance related to obedience to the apostolic teaching. The concept of maturity is communicated in both parabolic and analogic fashion to Christians of the early Church; those who have not moved toward this goal are reproved (He. 5:11–6:1; 1 Cor. 14:20). Christian maturity is a result of acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of Christ and His salvation. Such knowledge prevents deception by erroneous doctrine and enables the believer with discernment and competence to apply the apostolic teaching to everyday life (He. 5:14). Thus the life of the mature Christian, both in thought and in action, is in accordance with NT teaching.

Bibliography.—C. K. Barrett, comm on 1 Corinthians (HNTC, 1968); TDNT, VIII, s.v. τέλος κτλ.: τέλειος (Delling).¹

¹ R. J. Wyatt, [“Mature,”](#) in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*, ed. Geoffrey W Bromiley (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 289–290.