



INTRODUCTION

Hear the true story of an Olympic marksman. In Olympic competition, this marksman was ahead of his competition by such a wide margin that all he was required to do in the last round of shooting was to hit anywhere on the target – even the rung furthest from the bullseye would be sufficient to secure his gold medal. As the leader, he would shoot last, after all of his competitors had registered their final scores. When it came to be his time to shoot, he took aim, fired, and hit a dead-on bullseye. But when he lowered his scope, it was revealed he had hit the bullseye of the target *beside* the target he should have been aiming at. By not even hitting his target at all, he did not win gold, nor silver, nor bronze. An expert marksman who should have won, instead lost. In the same way, expert marksmen who proclaim Jesus with wrong aims, intents, selfish ambition, or as a means of personal gain will not be gold medal recipients no matter how wonderful their “results” may seem to be on earth.

Jesus is the only perfect one who has ever lived and will ever live. But Jesus said, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (See Matthew 5:48.) Perfection is the demonstration of the likeness of God. It is only attained through the total transformation of an individual from their old nature to the divine nature that God has granted to dwell inside of us as His children. Even the Apostle Paul openly confessed that he did not consider himself to have attained this but Paul revealed something about the mindset of the mature believer.

*Philippians 3:10-17: I want to know Christ--yes, to know the **power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.** Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. **All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.** And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in **following my example**, brothers and sisters, and just as **you have us as a model**, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.*

Paul clearly laid out the mindset of those focused on eternal life with God and set his own life as the example of one who is walking towards this aim. The pattern of Paul's life reflected the pattern of the life of our crucified King, Jesus. This is a life focused on eternity and living life on earth as a citizen of heaven. The mindset of the mature is to know Christ and to be like Him as a pure and spotless Bride who has readied herself for His return.

Pressing on to Maturity

The author of the Book of Hebrews chastised readers about their complacency in pressing on towards maturity. They had grown so weary in their attempts to stand for Christ that they became stagnant and were unable to hear and perceive the ways of God correctly.

Hebrews 5:11-14; 6:1-3: We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not

acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. **But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.**

Many of them could or should have been proficient enough in the ways of God to teach others and lead by example like Paul demonstrated. But they had stopped trying to understand what God is really looking for in Christ's followers.

How could this be? Because the road to maturity is laden with sharing in the sufferings of Jesus. The path to eternal life is a narrow and difficult way and few find it. (Matthew 7:14.) Maturity is attained through successfully persevering in the faith through trials and tribulations of many kinds.

*James 1:2-4 - Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let **perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.***

The command of Jesus to His disciples is to love one another as He loves us. Total agape love is selfless surrender in willing charity with no expectation of receiving anything return. In order to love as Jesus loves it means first and foremost having agape love for God whom we serve with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and also agape love towards others whom God allows us to reach for His glory.

*1 Timothy 1:5 - The goal of this command is **love**, which comes from a **pure heart** and a **good conscience** and a **sincere faith**.*

Paul's concept of God's love was not an endorsement for lawlessness or sin at the expense of Christ's blood. There is a genuine love which emanates from real knowledge of God through Christ in contrast to a counterfeit love which is manufactured through a carnal heart which has not been purified, a seared conscience which has not been cleansed, and an insincere faith which has not been established in the righteousness of God. No matter how loving a person may appear to be, God knows the heart.

It is time to grow up and put away pretending and make believe. It is time to engage with God and press on to know Him to the fullest extent available to us. It is time to put away tricks and showmanship, puffed up pride, false securities, and wrong motives. There is more of God that we have not and cannot know while we are aiming at the wrong target. Let us press on to maturity to know Him.

*1 Corinthians 13:11 - When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. **When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.***

Perfection Course Elements

In the seven units of this course, we will dig into seven aspects of spiritual maturity. These elements of maturity are: 1) Open Ears to Obey; 2) Foundation of Christ & the Whole Counsel of God; 3) Functioning from Divine Nature; 4) Skilled in the Word of Righteousness; 5) Kingdom Gospel with Signs Following; 6) Discernment of Good and Evil; 7) Fulfilling Ministry to Prepare the Bride. If we are lacking in any of these elements or if we are not quite fully like Jesus in any of these elements, then we have not yet attained to spiritual maturity. This course was designed to be taken again and again as we grow. No matter how mature we become, there will always be more of God to press into.

May you be richly blessed as you grow in your knowledge of Him!