

Sermon for March 7, 2021, “Growing into Spiritual Maturity”

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 3:1-7 Ephesians 4:11-15 ¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴ We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Introduction: What is spiritual maturity?

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Lent. I meditate on the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament. By the way, it is amazing how the Lord works to train the Israelites. The Lord helps the Israelites achieve spiritual maturity in order to give them a rich life. Through today's sermon, I want to preach how to achieve a mature church and achieve spiritual maturity.

Dear Brothers and Sisters! What do you think spiritual maturity is?

Spiritual maturity is Christlikeness. According to Mark 3:14; the first purpose of Jesus' calling for his disciples is '**to accompany together**'.

What these words mean is that, as Jesus' disciples, we must see and learn all about Him as we live with Him. Christians must imitate Jesus' obedience and humility. And we must imitate the intimate fellowship that Jesus shared with God the Father. We must imitate Jesus' patience for one another. Also, we must imitate the compassionate heart of Jesus.

Romans 8:29 says, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.”

The meaning of this verse is that the ultimate goal for a Christian is to imitate the image of Christ. So, when we are spiritually mature, our relationship with the Lord becomes intimate and deeper first, and we move on to a harmonious relationship with our neighbors. **What are the characteristics of spiritual maturity?**

Body: Characteristics of spiritual maturity

1) Spiritual maturity is achieved through discipline.

Hebrews 5:12-13 says, “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.”

In this verse, the writer of the Hebrews uses parable to rebuke those who remain in the state of an infant or child who is feeding. This means that just because we have lived in our religious life for a long time does not mean we will become mature by ourselves. If we neglect to get to know the Lord, our spiritual growth will be slow. Just as athletes improve their skills through training, so too should we progress toward spiritual maturity through discipline. **And then, what is the characteristic of the second spiritual maturity?**

2) Spiritual maturity is a time-consuming process

Spiritual maturity does not happen all at once by completing a course of Bible study. We must admit that there is no accelerated course of spiritual maturity. This means that spiritual maturity is a

process of sanctification that becomes like the Lord throughout our life. So, a Christian must learn who Jesus is and what His teachings are through all our life.

That is why the writer of Hebrews likens the life of faith to a long marathon. **Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."**

By the way, our race of faith is not always enjoyable. In Hebrews 12:2, the Greek word 'agon', translated as 'run', appears in 1 Timothy 6:12 as well. **1 Timothy 6:12 says, "Fight the good fight of the faith."** Here, the word 'agon' is translated as 'fight'. Also, **Colossians 2:1 says, "I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally."** Here, the word 'agon' means 'struggling'.

This shows that spiritual maturity is a lifelong process in which we endure pain, tears, and conflict until we reach the finish line. **Then what is the third characteristic of spiritual maturity?**

3) Spiritual maturity requires a correct understanding of the Word of the Bible and a firm belief in the Word of the Bible.

1 Timothy 4:7 says, "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly." This verse means that a Christian must correctly learn the word of God in order to come to godliness. So, the apostle Paul urges the brothers and sisters to be enlightened, commanded, and taught by the Word. Also, he says that he himself must be nurtured by the Word, too. The purpose of teaching the Word is to establish the body of Christ, as in Ephesians 4:12.

And the important thing in the teaching of the Word is that first we must have a good knowledge and correct understanding of Jesus Christ. It is impossible for us to develop faith without a correct understanding of Christ. The second important point in the teaching of the Word is that **today's text Ephesians 4:14 shows us; "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."**

This verse tells us that when we learn or teach the Word of God, we must learn and teach what we can to resist the false teachings of the world and keep true truth to the end. **So, what kind of effort should we make for spiritual maturity?**

First, we must obey the words of the Bible.

The first step in building a relationship with God is to admit that we are sinners before the Words of the Bible. By acknowledging our shortcomings and limitations, we must confess Jesus as the master of our lives. Also, we must strive to obey the words of the Bible rather than rely solely on our experiences in our daily lives.

Second, we must constantly check ourselves through the words of the Bible.

Hebrews 4:11 says, "Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience." This passage shows us that the true comfort for humans is in the Lord and comes from Him. That is why we must examine and reflect on ourselves through the words of the Bible. In order for humans to enter the eternal rest that the Lord gives, we must obey by faith, and in order to obey, we must reflect on ourselves in front of the Word of God and check our minds.

Third, we must fill our hearts with the words of the Bible.

The Christian life is not just about being passive; it is about actively practicing God's love. That is why we must be healed and filled with the words of the Bible. Through regularly reading of the Bible, we must be able to experience the wonderful grace of the Word from the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: Let us achieve spiritual maturity

Now let's summarize today's sermon. **Matthew 4:4 says, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."** Since man is a spiritual being created in the image of God, we cannot live with bread alone. Therefore, we must strive for spiritual maturity. In particular, we must be filled with God's Word. When we are filled with the Word, the work of the Holy Spirit will take place in us. Then our personality will become more mature through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Also, John 6:68 says, Simon Peter answered the Lord, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." This verse is Peter's confession.

I expect all of us to hold on to the Word of the Lord, to read, to hear, to keep it, to be guided by the Word, to experience the power of the Word, and to experience healing through the Word.