

# Maturity

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All of us are babes when born into God's family, but maturity should be our aim. A mature person is fully developed, grown up, seasoned, experienced; he has attained spiritual adulthood or wholeness.

The word "perfect" sometimes is used in the Bible in the sense of mature or complete, rather than meaning flawless (Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 6:1; Jas. 1:4).

The following are some indications of maturity:

## **Childish Things Are Put Away**

Paul once remarked, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11). His illustration of a point about the duration of spiritual gifts may be applied to our subject.

Childish speech is put away. A child's speech may be broken, incoherent, and confused. Clear speech requires clear thinking (1 Cor. 14:20). Childish attitudes and reactions are discarded. Grown men and women who whimper and whine to get attention are childish. Reacting to a problem like a spoiled brat is a childish thing. Arguing as if to get in the last word is a childish thing. All such actions are put away by the mature.

## **Ability to Take Solid Food**

Some Christians who ought to be teachers still need first principles; they need milk, not solid food. "For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14). Many church members prefer spiritual pablum to divine T-bones! Growth comes through use or practice.

Experience in the word of God is gained by searching the scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13; Acts 17:11), by meditation (Psa. 1:1-2; 119:97), and by being taught and by teaching others.

## **Ability to Discern Good and Evil**

"But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:14, NASB). The faculties of the soul must "discriminate between those things which differ in their moral qualities" (R. Milligan). We are constantly confronted with decisions relating to morals and ethics. Mature minds are

discerning minds. Skill in discernment is “the hallmark of maturity” (R.S. Taylor).

Isaiah charged that some in his day were so confused that they called evil good, and good evil. “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20). Today, some do not see any wrong in dancing, mixed bathing, social drinking, buying lottery tickets, etc., because they lack mature discernment of the difference between good and evil. They fail to distinguish between that which brings honor to God and that which brings reproach on his name.

### **Self-Discipline**

A mature person has learned to control anger. Someone has compared anger to a circus performer walking the high wire with no safety net. Even a quick flash of anger has great potential to lead to sin (Eph. 4:26-27). When someone gets mad, anger takes control of him. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32).

A mature individual bridles his tongue (Jas. 1:26; 3:1-12). When properly used, our words perform much good in God’s service. When wrongly used, they produce enormous damage. The tongue, though a little member of the body, is a potential fire; it can generate a world of iniquity. Speech-control is a must.

A mature Christian keeps his body in subjection (1 Cor. 9:27). He keeps a watchful eye on himself. The practice of self-restraint requires submission to God and denial of self. The desires of the flesh are not allowed to override the higher spiritual interests.

### **Steadfastness**

A sure sign of immaturity is one’s being carried about with every wind of doctrine. Paul tells us to “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness . . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:14-15). A stern warning is issued in Hebrews 13:9, “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” Some people seem attracted to every novel idea that is introduced.

Instead of vacillating from one stance to another, the mature Christian is “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). His feet are planted solidly on the foundation of truth. He will not yield to popular trends and powerful personalities. He rises above petty bickering and perseveres in pursuing peace and holiness (Heb. 13:14). He runs with patience the race set before him, focusing on Jesus, the source and perfecter of his faith (Heb. 12:1-2).