

Studies in Christianity Spiritual Maturity #4

S#1.

Progressing Toward Maturity

S#2.

Text : II Pet. 1: 4-8 ; Heb. 3: 5-14

A. The young are eager to move forward with their lives.

S#3.

1. Elementary students are eager to be the big high school students.
2. American young people look forward to their 16th birthday so they can drive.
3. High school students look forward with great anticipation to whatever comes next.

B. Once one is out of school life slows down and becomes more about the now.

1. After one is employed and married life becomes rather routine.
2. Raising the children becomes the central activity of one's life.
3. One is aware that he needs to prepare for his retirement, but the present is consuming

C. As one enters his later years he begins to realize there is more behind than ahead

1. Some turn their eye toward the past and try to relive their "glory days"
2. Some have the attitude of the successful farmer :
Luke 12: 19 – 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'"
3. But there are those who will press on to new things that they had wanted to do for God or for themselves, but life got in the way.

D. The point is that life is like traveling upstream in a mighty river.

S#4.

1. One must stay under power or he will be swept away by the current.
2. One must move faster than the current or he loses the ability to steer.
3. Only those who press on reach their destination b/c if he pauses he get pushed back.

E. In many respects our spiritual life parallels our physical life.

1. From the time one is born again, he must keep progressing or he will be swept away.
2. Some will be very successful alongside others who fail.
3. Each will reap the reward or the consequences of his own efforts.

E. The port where our journey ends is beyond this temporary earthly realm.

I. We have already observed some of the steps that lead to spiritual maturity. S#5.

A. Our journey toward God begins with faith. S#6.

1. One who will approach God must be fully convinced that He is the “I Am.”
 - a. **Heb. 11:6** – And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
 - b. **James 1: 6** – But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. S#7.
7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, **8** being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
2. Faith is the conduit through which God’s grace / salvation reaches man.

B. All faith is built upon a foundation of knowledge. S#8.

1. **Rom. 10: 17** – So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
2. Not everyone who hears the word profits from it because some have hard hearts.
 - a. **Heb. 4: 2** –For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they S#9.
also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.
 - b. **I Cor. 1: 18** – For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
3. Those who believe the word, receive it, and place their faith in it are saved by it.
 - a. **James 1: 21** – Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of S#10.
wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
 - b. **I Cor. 15: 1** – Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, **2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

C. Once the foundation of faith is laid, the Christian life is built upon it. S#11. The Christian life is referred to as “light” because it is characterized by virtue.

1. The desire to grow spiritually is characterized by a desire to eliminate evil.

I Pet. 2: 1 – Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy S#12.
 and envy and all slander, **2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk
 (cf .. **Col. 3:8-10**) of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,
2. Since all sin originates in the mind/heart, the Christian begins by changing his mind.

Rom. 12: 2 – And do not be conformed to this world, but
be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

D. Like the athlete, the one who will develop spiritually must learn self-control.

1. Those who would be spiritually successful must lead lives under control.

I Cor. 9: 24 – Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only **S#13.** one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. **25** Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ... **27** but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

2. Our memory verse for the week was :

Prov. 25:28 – Like a city that is broken into and without walls **S#14.** is a man who has no control over his spirit.

II. All of this is only of value if one's faith will persevere to the end. S#15.**A. Notice our texts :**

1. **II Pet. 1: 5** – Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith **S#16.** supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance
2. **Heb. 3: 6** – but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house — **S#17.** whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.
3. **Heb. 3: 14** – For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

B. The Apostle Paul had confidence because he had remained faithful to the end.

1. **II Tim, 4: 7** – I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have **S#18.** kept the faith; **8** in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.
2. The Apostle was aware that there was a possibility he could be lost.
I Cor. 9: 27 – but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, **S#19.** after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

C. The Apostle warned people they could become lost after being saved. S#20.

1. The Apostle told the brethren at Corinth that they would LOSE their salvation IF they turned away from the gospel
I Cor. 15: 1 – Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, **2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

2. In a letter written to Christians, the Apostle told the brethren they would be “cut off” if they did not continue to follow God.

a. **Rom. 1: 7** – to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: **S#21.**
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

b. **Rom. 11: 22** – Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, **if** you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

D. Salvation is given and maintained upon the condition of faith. **S#22.**

1. **Eph. 2: 8** – For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; **9** not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

2. **Col. 1: 21** – yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach — **23** if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. **S#23.**

III. How then does one go about holding fast the beginning of his assurance firm until the end. **S#24.**

A. Our American culture is an obstacle Christians must overcome. **S#25.**

1. In 2004 same sex marriage was voted down by all 11 states considering it.
 - a. **Today**, it is the law of the whole land.
 - b. Homosexuals are a legally protected class.
 - c. Cannot refuse to participate in same sex marriage ceremonies. (*cake* , *B&B*)

2. *To live comfortably within the American culture is to be out of step with God.*

3. **II Cor. 6: 15** – Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer **S#26.**
in common with an unbeliever? **16** Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. **17** Therefore come out from their midst and be separate." says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean;" and I will welcome you.**18** " And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

4. The Apostle Paul worded the same admonition this way ; **S#27.**

Rom. 12: 2 – And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, (**John 17:11f** – in, but not of world)

B. Prayer is vital to our faith being able to persevere in this evil world. S#28.

1. We must cultivate a dynamic prayer life. *It will never just happen.*
2. The Apostle would admonish us : “Never stop praying.” **I Thes. 5: 17**
3. Make prayer a regular part of your day.
 - a. Greet the day with a prayer of praise.
 - b. Close the day with a prayer of thanksgiving.
 - c. Include God in your conversation with yourself.
 - d. Set aside 30 to 45 min. each day to talk with God. (*get past gimmi, gimmi*)
 - 1) Conversation must get down to the intimate and emotional level.
 - 2) Such regular intimate conversations are also key to maintaining marriage.

S#29.

C. We maintain our faith by making the goal of our lives to stay within God’s love.

1. We stay within God’s love by prayerfully awaiting His appearing. S#30.
Jude 20 – But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, **21** keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.
2. Being IN God’s love is inseparably linked to obeying Him. S#31.
 - a. Jesus said ... **John 14: 15** – If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
 - b. **I John 5: 3** – For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. **4** For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.

D. One will never fail to persevere who has the goal of his life to please God. S#32.

1. **Eph. 5: 8,10** – You were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light **10** trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. **9** (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),
2. **I Pet. 2: 2** .. one desires the word in order to grow .. and growth draws one to God.

CONCLUSION :

A. To persevere in one’s faith is to maintain his eternal relationship with God. S#33.

B. All relationships require maintenance & this is one’s most important relationship. S#34.

INVITATION : Do you have a relationship with God. S#35.

S#36. ... Communion slide

Lesson Text :**II Peter 1: 4-8**

4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. **5** Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, **7** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **8** For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 3: 4-14

4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. **5** Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; **6** but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house — whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,

"Today if you hear His voice, **8** do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, **9** where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years. **10** "Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said. 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways; **11** as I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. **14** For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.