

When We Choose To Mature In Christ.

2/2/20

- Letter from the Bricklayer

It just goes to prove that experience (maturity) will help you work smarter and keep you out of lot of trouble and pain.

Pray

The church in Corinth was in a city that was very modern. The cities thinking had been influenced by ideas from all over the world. The saying “*what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.*”; would apply even more so in this city. People were constantly coming and going in the city, temple prostitution was the norm and you were expected to honor the gods in this way. Pleasures and needs were quickly met and this worldly thinking was influencing the church.

Paul talks about them as true believers, but something had happened to stop their spiritual growth.

You know it’s like this, when things are going really well and you have everything you need why work hard at anything.

Once God truly reveals himself to us we have a choice to mature in our faith. If you stay content in your immaturity you will not be able to distinguish between subtleties of good and evil. You will put yourself in a position that is in opposition to God and God will eventually react to correct you.

For the Christian, the choice is clear. To avoid looking like the rest of the world, we must mature in the faith, growing up in all things in Christ so that we are no longer spiritual infants, tossed about by the lies of the world (Eph. 4:14-15). We must come to know the difference between the wisdom of God and the foolish wisdom of

the world, and that is only achieved by careful and diligent study of the Word of God. We are to seek God’s wisdom in prayer (James 1:5) and enjoy the fellowship of other mature believers who can encourage us to reject worldliness and embrace godliness.

No one will ever be able to stand before God and accuse Him of controlling them. God lets you make the choice to obey or not to obey.

But what happens when you or I or for that matter we as a church choose maturity over immaturity.

What happens to us as believers?

What changes?

Let’s look at a church in that region who had similar cultural pressures but a different reaction to the Gospel and its results.

The city of Thessalonica 350 miles to the north was the capital of the region. It has never slowed down in its growth even up to the present day. Today’s population is close to 3 million. While Corinth is nothing more than a small city.

When Paul left Thessalonica and ended up in Athens, but he was so concerned about the persecution that broke out against the brothers and sisters that he sent Timothy back with a letter to encourage them.

Let's look at the beginning of that letter and see what he has to say.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 1

We are not sure how long Paul spent in Thessalonica, but it was probably close to 6-8 weeks. Not a long time compared to Corinth where he spent a year.

Yet the difference in the two churches is remarkable.

1&2 Corinthians are long compared to 1&2 Thessalonians. The content is very different.

Paul was reminding the Corinthians about spiritual milk and some meat but when he wrote the Thessalonians it was all spiritual meat.

The Corinthian church was **not** experiencing persecution because of the cities anything goes mentality, while the Thessalonian church was experiencing all kinds of persecution because of their not being like everyone else.

So, when Paul writes to the Thessalonian church it's out of deep concern that they don't get discouraged because of the problems they are encountering.

Paul remembers their reaction to the Gospel and in **1 Thessalonians 1:1-2** Paul says he is continually thanking God for them.

Look what he says he is thanking God for when he prays for them.

1. He thanks God for their work. Or a better translation would be their faith that causes them to act. Not actions produced by selfish motives or personal gain.
2. He thanks God for their labor. Effort prompted by love. The don't do good deeds because they are expected to do them, they do them because they truly love the recipients of the good deeds.
3. He thanks God for their endurance. Their stick-to-it-ness inspired by their hope in Jesus Christ. They go the extra mile and work sacrificially because of their hope in Jesus Christ.

This is not what Paul says about the church in Corinth. He condemns them for their jealousy, quarreling, and selfishness. A church with so much going for them and so much promise yet so many problems.

An interesting question comes up as you read Paul's letter to the Thessalonians that is answered later in the passage.

- What is the work they were doing?

Verse 6 and verse 8 answer the question.

1. They worked hard at imitating Paul's life and Jesus life.
2. They worked hard at letting the Gospel ring out from them throughout the region.

Because of their actions their faith became known everywhere.

Paul goes on to say that he doesn't even have to say anything. People are telling him about the Thessalonians, their faith, and how they turned from idols to serve the living and true God. All the while waiting for the Son of God, Jesus, to return.

The American churches are more like the Corinthians. We live in a society where almost anything goes and there really is no persecution. Therefore, we are susceptible to the same problems as the Corinthians, but we should be like the Thessalonians.

We as individuals and as a church need to choose spiritual maturity as a priority in our life.

- What happens to us as believers when we do this?

We will work hard for the Lord, practicing sacrificial love to first our church family then anyone the Lord puts in our path that has a need.

- What changes?

Our attitude and willingness to work hard for the Lord.

This kind of church becomes known for their faith, love and endurance in their being an example for Jesus in the community.

This is what happens to a church that choose spiritual maturity and that choice being motivated by our hope in the salvation offered by Jesus Christ.

It starts with each one of us as individuals.

You have to choose to want spiritual maturity.

James describes in chapter 1 what happens.

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Let's choose, as a church, to be spiritually mature.

But it first starts with each one of us. It's your choice.

What will you choose, and what do you want God to do in your life?