

Eph 4:13 Christian Maturity

Until we all arrive--It only takes a single moment to be saved. It happens when we put our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ our Savior. But from that moment onwards, we begin the lifelong process of progressive sanctification, becoming more and more like Jesus as we grow in Him. We have been tasked with the building up of other believers, the Body of Christ, so that we can all be proper dwelling places of God the Holy Spirit, using our spiritual gifts to working all together to strengthen and edify each other. Paul is now going to describe Christian growth, and the goals of this growth.

To the unity of the faith--Paul describes the goal of building up the body of Christ as arriving "at the unity of the faith". The Church as the body is used to emphasize that we are united with Christ only, serving Him only as Master, and each other as Brothers and Sisters in communion with Him, and with each other. 1 Cor 10:16-17 **16 Is the cup of blessing which we bless not a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is the bread which we break not a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Since there is one loaf, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one loaf.** And that as one body, brought by One Holy Spirit, we should be united together. After all, the members of the body are bound together, and when one part of us feels pain, we suffer. 1 Cor 12:13 **13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Cor 12:27 27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.** This requires diligence Eph 4:3-6 **3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.** We are loved by Christ, and cherished by Him as the Church that He gave Himself up for. We must hold firmly to Christ, submitting to His authority as Col 2 19-20 says **19 [and not] holding firmly to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and [w]ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. 20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees,** In other words, we should follow Christ, as the body follows the head, and not indulge self-righteousness, and religious service, but rather service to Jesus in Spirit and Truth. God has given Christ as our head, and all of us as individual believers as parts of the body, each with gifts to strengthen the body to perform as it should, working in unity together to help grow each other toward the fullness of Christ, looking more and more like Him Then we can live like Jesus, our head lives, and we'll experience His love, peace, and joy, and gratitude, as we follow His Word, loving one another. In Ephesians 4:3 the way to lead a life worthy of our calling is to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Verse 2 tells us how to maintain spiritual unity: "**With all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love.**"

Lowliness and Meekness--As individual Christians, we must continually cultivate an attitude of lowliness and meekness. When Jesus is describing the character of Christians; who the Holy Spirit will cause us to be by changing us from the inside out as citizens of the Kingdom of God, the first priority is on understanding our moral bankrupt-ness, gentleness, and meekness (Matt 5:3-5, Eph 2:5-8. This kind of character can't help but bring unity amongst believers, because it encourages looking past ourselves to seeing the needs of others. This enables us to have the character to Eph 4:3 **Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called in all lowliness and meekness.**

Patience and Forbearance--True humility, it doesn't mean that we are a doormat; but that we have been chosen by the King of the Universe. However, we glory in Him, not ourselves. Lowliness is the prerequisite of patience. Haughty people are not patient.

Preserving Common Care for Each Other--As our character changes, the Holy Spirit will produce fruit in us that helps us focus on caring for one another. How can you keep on caring about a person who doesn't like you? Or a person who likes music you don't like? Or a person who opposes you and wants to frustrate your dreams? How do you maintain the unity of the Spirit with them instead of becoming

hostile and cold? Paul's answer: be lowly in spirit so that you can patiently endure their differences and their sins.

Knowledge of the Son of God

This knowledge of the Son of God is only made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. This word epignosis means “to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, to know accurately, to know well.” Notice, that in 2 Peter 1:5, Peter also emphasizes that faith in Christ comes first, then a Christian Character (virtue) inspired by the Holy Spirit, then knowledge, saying **5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,** and gnosis, knowledge means “a seeking to know, an inquiry, investigation”. This is true knowledge. Paul, an academic student taught under Gamaliel, the best Rabbi teacher of his day, comparing his academic learning to the knowledge of Jesus said in Phil 3:8 **8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ,** God tells us repeatedly that our job is to get to know Him. Deut 6:6-9 **6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.** God told them this, so that they would be continually reminded of who He is, and who He expects them to be. To be pleasing to the Lord, we must have a knowledge of His will, and do it. When Paul heard about the love that the Colossians were showing to one another, that they were demonstrating the Character of Christ, he now prayed for their knowledge of Christ Col 1:9-10 **9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard about it, have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;** It is our job on Earth, not only to serve God, but to get to know Him better. God wants to give us knowledge of Him; God wants us to understand His wisdom. James 1:5 **But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.** He wants us to turn to Him, not our own understanding. And means that we must seek out His wisdom and knowledge in His Word. Make it a priority in your life, and you will find that you get closer to God! And this can't help but be reflected in who you are as a person. **to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.**--Our growth into mature Christians involves moral effort, making the right decision, discipline—doing things even when we don't want to, renunciation—stopping doing things that we know do not please God, and perseverance in pursuit of Jesus. There are no shortcuts. Spiritual maturity is not automatic, Sincere moral effort in dependence on the Holy Spirit is involved. James 1:22 **Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.** Spiritual maturity is not the mere possession of spiritual gifts. The maturing Christian will have those spiritual gifts with which the Holy Spirit has endowed us, but will also be using them to strengthen their brothers and sisters in Christ. These spiritual gifts are valuable, but only if they are exercised in love and only as they result in the unity and upbuilding, strengthening and edifying of the church. The true measure of Christian maturity is not the possession of gifts of the Spirit, but the production of the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-23). Christian maturity is realizing the God-given purpose and Will for our lives. The word “perfect” or “mature” can be used of our Lord Jesus in the absolute sense. Spiritual maturity is Christlikeness. We are as much mature as we are like Christ, and no more. The ultimate goal is stated by Paul when he wrote (Col 1:28): **“We proclaim him, teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect [mature] in Christ”**. That's the overall goal of the Church. God's purpose is to produce disciples who reflect His Son. God's purpose is to produce people who fulfill the ideal of what humanity is supposed to be and live up to being Citizens of Heaven, New Creations in Christ. **And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**--2 Corinthians 3:18. And we continually **Grow in the grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** 2 Peter 3:18.