

“Let Us Go On To Perfection”

Introduction: I rejoice in the congregational maturation of PSD over the years. A congregation will only mature as the individual members within it mature.

1. The Failure to Progress

A. Various exhortations in the NT to mature in knowledge/faith:

1. Col 1:28 – *“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”*
2. Eph 4:12-15 – *“to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ ... no longer children... may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ.”*
3. The word “perfect” (*teleios*) does not mean “flawless” but suggests continual development according to our abilities.

B. Why do some Christians stay spiritual babies?

1. Some are double-minded. They have never fully established their allegiance to Christ. Jesus warned: *“No one can serve two masters ...”* (Mt 6:24). These people always measure obedience against competing desires and opportunities.
2. Some base lives on emotion/circumstance. Those who fail to develop are undisciplined and measure everything by the here-and-now and their feelings. Such a Christian is *“unstable in all his ways”* (Jas 1:8). Illustrate with graph.
3. True faith is lacking. Their service is outwardly conforming but offered out of habit, social interests, guilt and other less noble motives. This promotes vulnerability to the cunning craftiness and trickery of men (Eph 4:14).

C. If we fail to grow we will go *backward* spiritually – Heb 5:12. The nature of the world and human life is corrosive. Unused things deteriorate, including minds.

2. Things That Promote Spiritual Growth

A. Attitude: Christians must have an appetite for growth. *“Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst** for righteousness, for they shall be filled”* (Mt 5:6). *“... **desire** the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby”* (1 Pet 2:2).

B. Study: There is no substitute for energetic, industrious study of the Scriptures (2 Tim 2:15; Ac 17:11). **The Bible is understandable!** Those who ridicule it, misuse it and carelessly toss it aside without truly *studying* it. Some are “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Tim 3:7).

1. Many things compete for Bible study time. If you spend one hour per week studying your Bible you probably spend **more** time fixing your hair, walking the dog, writing letters, vacuuming the house, paying bills, carpooling, watching sports on TV and a hundred other lesser activities that fill our time.

2. Learning is an inherently uncomfortable process. Our erroneous notions may be exposed; we may have to confront our personal shortcomings. But we must leave “*the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ ... (and) go on to perfection*” (Heb 6:1).

3. The most challenging aspect of learning the Scriptures is to apply principles to real-life situations. This we may call *wisdom*. Such wisdom comes from God through prayer (Jas 1:5).

C. Testing: We will never progress unless we are tested (Jas 1:2-4 – “*let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*”). This understanding puts a different spin on hardship: “*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor 12:10).

D. Goal: We have already seen that Christ is our example and pattern (Eph 4:15; 1 Pet 2:21). **Illus:** Paint meter. A \$10,000 instrument that perfectly matches the color of automobile and determines paint mixture to match. Our desire to emulate Christ should be as exacting.

E. Cooperative work of evangelists/elders/teachers – Eph 4:11ff. Growth is not an “at large” endeavor; we need the guidance, wisdom, knowledge and stimulation of other Christians to provide an environment of growth.

Conclusion: God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows what we can handle and what will destroy us. But we must work cooperatively with Him and trust Him so that we can take advantage of growth opportunities.