

Numerous Benefits and Attributes of Spiritual Maturity: Holding tightly to the gospel message. Knowing what Christ has done for me. Natural to seek to do good. Understanding the glory of eternal life. Boasting in the glorious effects of suffering and trials. Having an unmistakable life and reputation as a believer of Christ. Hoping for the unseen and glorious future with Christ. Possessing a robust knowledge of Scripture. Walking in peace and unity with the body of Christ. Comforted in affliction. Strengthened by the word of God. Know the labor of ministry and have a greater desire to serve the Lord. Have a deep love for Christ. Pursuing righteousness and godliness in life. Having greater wisdom. Have experienced the mercy of God in suffering. Able to stand against false teaching. Contributing and doing more now than earlier in life. Standing firm even as the world grows darker.

- **Endurance is the Mark of a Seasoned Christian:** it gives assurance of salvation and soundness of faith, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7. (1) Endurance is a believer's duty, commanded in James 1:4, "and let perseverance have its perfect work." (2) Endurance is to be pursued.
- **It is a believer's duty:** James 1:2-3, "perseverance" is the word endurance. "Let," V4, is a command to become a mature believer in the faith. In John's letter to the church of Ephesus in Rev. 2:1-7, Jesus refers to perseverance and endurance twice in the letter. It is the mark of believers to endure because Christ keeps us. We endure for the sake of the Lord's name, Rev. 2:3. They resisted those who are evil. These are those who are a believer in name only, but don't live holy lives in Christ (deeds of the Nicolaitans). Christians endure until the end.
- **It is to be pursued by believers. How do we pursue endurance in suffering and injustice?**
 - 1) **With a proper view of yourself:** Jude 24-25, Jesus will keep you from stumbling. We will keep our faith and stand blameless before Christ in His glory. Our salvation is based upon Christ's work on the cross and not our own works. A) My view can't be based upon affirmation by others. B) My view can't be defined by those who scoff and belittle me. C) My view rests upon the work and person of Jesus and looking to Him and living godly in this world, Col. 3:1-5.
 - 2) **Confession of sin:** 1 John 1:9, a sign of a true believer is one who regularly confesses sin to God. Results in forgiveness and purification. It removes impediments to fellowship (Matt. 11:25-30). Purification (Ps. 51) is washing, cleansing, and renewal of the heart.
 - 3) **Graciousness towards of others:** Gal. 6:1, "in a spirit of gentleness." The goals are: 1) Restore the believer to a right relationship with God and others. 2) To be gentle, humble, and lowly towards others (similarly as commanded to wives in 1 Pet. 3:4). 3) Self-reflection, "looking to yourself, so that you *too* will not be tempted." We examine our own personal sin tendencies. In our thoughts seeing others as Christ sees them: redeemed, precious, and holy.
 - 4) **Faithfulness to basic duties:** Ps. 88, speaks of great sorrow and darkness that has come from God (V3, 6-7). Doing what you know to do is an act of trusting the Lord. 1 Thess. 4:11, Paul speaks to the Thessalonian church who are being persecuted for their faith. Paul commands them to lead a quiet life and attend to their own business and work with their hands.
 - 5) **A time of intense communion with God:** James 4:8, "draw near to God and He will draw near to you." In the context of James 4, there is an examination of our motives and sinful actions (V1-3). There is an examination of our affections (V4). V8, commands us to cleanse ourselves of sin and purify our hearts. We pray in response to anxiety (Phil. 4:6) and consider our motives and thoughts compared to Scripture (Phil. 4:8-9).
 - 6) **Reaffirm your belief in sovereignty of God:** Phil. 4:6-7, the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts. Ps. 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." We are not to lean on our own understanding, Prov. 3:5. We must rest in His sovereignty.
 - 7) **Live one day at a time:** Matt. 6:34, don't live tomorrow today. There are plenty of evils and troubles today. Let the peace of God rule in our hearts, Col. 3:15.

Further Discussion and Application

There are warnings in Scripture to count the costs of following Christ. There is suffering and tribulation in life. How have you navigated difficult trials and circumstances? How has your faith been tested? How has it grown? As a mature believer, how has suffering grown and tested your faith? What comfort can you give to new believers as they grow in Christ?

How sovereign is God? How would you explain Col. 1:15-20 to someone? What are these powers? What does "He is before all things" mean? What does it mean to hold all things together? What does it mean to reconcile all things to Himself (Christ)? How is peace ultimately made by Christ?

What would a time of intense communion look like? In sorrow and suffering, there is often time of reflection because we draw back and grieve or are sick and weak and need rest. How can those times be an opportunity to give thanks and confess sin? When your health returns, what remains and results from the trial? How is thanksgiving now more present on your lips and your heart?

Considering the command from Paul to the Thessalonian church in 1 Thess. 4:11, why is doing the daily duties of life a godly response to trial and suffering? What does it reveal about your trust in the Lord? How is caring and working for you and your family and fellowship with believers a mark of a faithful believer?

Why is confession of sin a joy and blessing of the Christian life? What results from a heart that regularly confesses sin to the Lord? What joy does it bring in life to be pure and holy? What gentleness and kindness does it foster towards others when we acknowledge our sins and keep things right between other believers? Why is peace one of the greatest possessions the Christian has?