Message Four

The Process of Maturity

Scripture Reading: Gen. 47:7, 10; Heb. 6:1; Col. 1:28-29; Eph. 4:14

I. Genesis 37—45 is a record of the process of Jacob's maturity:

A. In Genesis 27 we see a supplanter; in chapter 37, a transformed man; and at the end of chapter 45, a mature person.

B. To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life, whereas to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Heb. 6:1:

1. The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life:
   a. God's eternal purpose can only be accomplished through our transformation and maturity—Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:28; 2:19.
   b. Maturity is a matter of having the divine life imparted into us again and again until we have the fullness of life—John 10:10.
2. Maturity is a matter of the enlargement of capacity—Psa. 4:1.
3. Maturity in life is the sum total of receiving the discipline of the Holy Spirit—Heb. 12:5-11.
4. God will sovereignly use persons, things, and events to empty us of everything that has filled us and to take away every preoccupation so that we may have an increased capacity to be filled with God—Luke 1:53; Matt. 5:6.

C. The life of Jacob reveals that everything that happens to us is under God's sovereignty for our transformation and maturity; nothing is accidental:

1. In order to become mature, Jacob first had to suffer the loss of Joseph, the treasure of his heart—Gen. 37:31-35.
2. A mature believer has learned that God is merciful and all-sufficient to meet his needs in every kind of situation—43:11, 13-14; 17:1; Phil. 1:19-21a; 4:11-12; cf. 1 Tim. 6:6-8.

II. In Song of Songs 6:13 the lover of Christ, having passed through the various stages of transformation, has become, in the maturity of Christ's life, the Shulammite, the reproduction and duplication of Christ to match Him for their marriage:

A. *Shulammite* is the feminine form of *Solomon,* indicating that, in the maturity of life, she has become the same as Christ in life, in nature, in expression, and in function for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy—v. 13.

B. In Song of Songs 3 the lover of Christ reaches a mature stage, becoming a palanquin, and eventually is reckoned by the Lord as Jerusalem—vv. 9-10; 6:4:

1. She reaches this stage by the breaking of her natural man and by the subduing of her will—3:6; 4:1, 4.
2. Through her living in Christ's ascension as the new creation in resurrection, the lover of Christ becomes mature in the riches of the life of Christ so that she becomes the building of God, the sanctuary of God—6:4.

III. We need to experience the development of the divine life and the divine nature contained in the divine seed that has been sown into us so that we may have a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom—2 Pet. 1:1, 4-11:

A. We have been allotted the wonderful, equally precious faith, and this faith is an all-inclusive seed—v. 1; 1 Pet. 1:23:

1. All the divine riches are in this seed, but we must be diligent to develop them; to grow to maturity is to develop what we already have—2 Pet. 1:1-8; 3:18.
2. By developing these virtues, we grow in life, and eventually, we will reach maturity, be full of Christ, and be qualified and equipped to be kings in the coming kingdom—Eph. 4:13-15; 2 Pet. 1:11.

3. We need to have the full development and maturity from the seed of faith, through the roots of virtue and knowledge, the trunk of self-control, and the branches of endurance and godliness, to the blossom and fruit of brotherly love and love—vv. 5-7.
4. The ultimate development of the divine nature within us is love—*agape,* the Greek word used in the New Testament for the divine love, which God is in His nature—v. 7; 1 John 4:8, 16:
5. When we partake of the divine nature and grow in life unto maturity, we are filled with God as love, and we become persons of love, even love itself—Eph. 3:19.

B. We should be diligent to pursue the growth, development, and maturity of the divine life and nature for a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom—2 Pet. 1:10-11.

IV. Paul's burden in the book of Hebrews was to bring the believers out of the initial stage of salvation on to maturity—5:11—6:5:

A. To be brought on to maturity is to be brought into the word of righteousness concerning Christ's heavenly ministry and the way of God's economy, the word that is solid food—5:12-14; 6:1:
1. The book of Hebrews was written to bring the believers on from the good word concerning Christ's earthly ministry to the word of righteousness concerning Christ's heavenly ministry and thereby bring the believers on to maturity—1:3; 4:14-16; 6:20; 7:25; 8:1-2.
2. The word of righteousness embodies the thought of God's justice and righteousness and governmental dealings with His people—5:13.
3. Righteousness is a matter of God's kingdom; righteousness issues from God in His administration and is related to His government and rule—Matt. 6:33; Psa. 89:14; 97:2; Isa. 32:1.

B. The Lord wants to bring us on to maturity, but we must cooperate with His gracious work—Heb. 6:1:
1. We need to share with Christ in His attainments—1:9; 3:14.
2. We need to be diligent to enter into the remaining Sabbath rest—4:9, 11.
3. We need to come forward to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace—v. 16.
4. We need to feed on the solid food to enjoy Christ as the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek—5:9-10, 14.

V. The goal of Paul's ministry was to present every man mature, full-grown, in Christ for the one new man—Col. 1:28-29; 3:10-11:

A. The Greek word rendered "full-grown" in Colossians 1:28 may also be translated "perfect," "complete," or "mature."

B. Paul's ministry was to dispense Christ into others so that they would be perfect and complete by maturing in Christ unto full growth.

C. For the one new man we need to labor and struggle to present all the believers full-grown in Christ, ministering Christ as life to them so that they can live by Him and grow with Him unto maturity—3:4; 2:19.

D. Our goal in preaching the gospel to sinners and in fellowshipping with the saints is to minister Christ into them so that they may mature in life and be presented full-grown in Him; this is for the growth of the new man—3:10-11; Eph. 4:13-14.

E. In order to become the one new man in reality and practicality, we need to grow up into Christ in all things—vv. 15-16, 24:
1. When we grow up into Christ in all things, we will no longer be different kinds of persons; rather, we will spontaneously take Christ as our person and our life—Col. 3:4, 10-11; Eph. 3:17.
2. When we grow up into Christ in all things to be a full-grown man, we all will be one in Christ; this is the universal one new man for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—v. 11; 4:13-14, 24; Gen. 1:26.