

Be A Mature Christian

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- [0 : 0 0] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. This is the next message in our series in the book of 2 Corinthians, entitled, We Faint Not.
- If you would, I want you to read with me 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 11 down to 14. 2 Corinthians 13, from verse 11 down to 14. The Bible says, Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect. Be of good comfort. Be of one mind. Live in peace.
- And the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.
- Father, please bring these truths home as we finish up this wonderful book that you wrote. Through the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth. And help us, Lord, as we grow and mature, that we would live out who we are.
- And I'll give you praise for it in Jesus' name. Amen. If you have your Bible open in verse 11, I wish you'd underline this. Be perfect. And that's really the title. Be a mature Christian.
- [1 : 1 3] Paul ends the book. Started talking to them. Told them to examine themselves in the last message we looked at. He started all the way back in 1 Corinthians and he's really worked with them.
- And as he finishes this letter, he says a lot of things. But something that has to jump off the page is be perfect. Be mature Christians. And I would like to go through some things that mature Christians do that are mentioned right here in the last part of this book.
- And so if you would take your Bible and stay there with me. The first thing is mature Christians regularly examine themselves and confess their sins. Mature Christians regularly examine themselves and confess their sins.
- You don't need someone else to examine you. You don't need a priest to forgive you. But as a mature Christian, you would be always wanting to say, Lord, am I pleasing you?
- Lord, am I where you want me to be? Lord, what are you dealing with me about? Now, in chapter 12 and verse 19, we've already seen it. Paul wasn't excusing himself.
- [2 : 1 6] He was trying to edify them. But he says, I fear that I'm going to find out when I get to see you that you guys are eat up with sin. He says there's going to be debates and envyings and wraths and strifes and backbitings and whisperings and swellings and tumults.
- And then he said, I'm even going to find out about people are already sinning, have already sinned, have not repented of uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness, which they have committed.
- I would just like to say to you tonight, as we finish this and we did the Lord's Supper tonight. And it's a time of confessing. Christians ought to confess and repent of sin on a regular basis.
- It ought to be, man, I love Jesus and I want to be the best Christian I can be. I don't want to do what I want to do. I want to do what he wants me to do.
- I don't want to fall into these sins of division or these filthy sins. I want to examine myself. If you're going to have a long and successful marriage, you're going to figure this out.

[3 : 14] You don't keep a long and successful marriage without learning to say, I'm sorry. I made a mistake. I was wrong. And I won't do that again. And as a Christian, it's the Lord living in you.

But can I just remind you sometimes along the way, we almost get the attitude. I'm saved by grace. And once I'm saved, I'm always saved. And we kind of leave aside that examining ourselves and stopping and saying, where am I?

And marriages that fall apart usually fall apart because of stupid little stuff you let keep building up. And Christians get cold on God by stupid little stuff you let build up.

And in this passage, he told them in what you read this morning in chapter 13 and verse 5, examine yourself. It is a natural part of our life that we ought to get right.

It is a maturity to realize that sin ought to be confronted. Do you understand that? In 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 1, he said, I'm coming on the third time I'm coming.

[4 : 20] And he said, and I'm going to get two and three witnesses. And I'm going to make sure every word's established. And I'm going to find out about what sin's going on. And I will not spare. Somewhere along the way, when we shift away from legalism and we shift to really trying to understand grace, we try to take that so far that all of a sudden, hey man, the preacher ought not confront sin.

And he ought not make me uncomfortable. And there ought not be anything said like that. But Paul didn't think that at all. Paul said, hey guys, there's these division sins going on. There's this gossip and sin going on.

There's even fornication and lasciviousness going on in your midst. And I am going to confront sin. And I will not spare. I won't cut you any slack.

Can I just remind you that he is warning those that have been in sin that they better get right. He's on his way and he intends to deal with it. He'll have no mercy on sin when he gets there.

They might think that he is weak and bodily presence, but they're about to learn something very different. They have said about him, when you're in our presence, we're not impressed.

[5 : 25] You're not that impressive of a person. You don't have that physique. You don't have that aura. You may can write really good letters, but you don't even speak that well. And we're not scared of you.

Write another tough letter. And he said, I'm coming. Third time. And when I get there, bless God, I am going to kick some backside. Get the sin out of the church and get the sin right.

That's not positive thinking. It is not prosperity gospel, but God's people want to live a holy life. Can you say amen? And we ought to go to church saying, open that book and show me the truth and help me learn.

Paul wanted them to be right. And he wanted them to be known as right with God. Look at chapter 13, verse 7. I pray to God that you do no evil. Not that we should appear approved, but that you should do that which is honest.

Even if you think of me as a reprobate, even if you guys don't like me, you think of me as a counterfeit, you think of me as not genuine, you think of me as not real. He said, I don't want you all. He said, I want you all to live a right life.

[6 : 29] Don't do wrong. He said, I don't want you to live holy lives so I'll look like a good preacher. I want you to do right because that's what you ought to be doing. That's what's right. Verse 8, he said, we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth.

And he said, maybe I'm weak and you are strong, but all I want is for you to grow up and for you to mature in Christ and to be right.

Paul wanted them to do right. Not so he'd look good, but because that was what God had done in them. He knows that he preached the truth and they believe the truth and the truth changed them.

He's glad that if they see him as weak and themselves as strong, his life is a life of giving to make others a success, not himself. He desires them to be all that they can be.

You understand that God wants you to live out who you are. He ends this book and he's going to go right there and say, be perfect. Be of good comfort.

[7 : 25] Be of one mind. Live in peace. They got a peace. Let's be with you. Be perfect. Be perfect. Many can't expect us to be perfect. I didn't do the talking. The Holy Spirit did it.

Be perfect. Paul didn't want to use sharpness when he came to talk to him. Look at verse 10, if you would. Chapter 13 and verse 10. Paul said, therefore, I write these things being absent, unless being present, I should use sharpness.

He said, I'm talking pretty tough in this letter because I am coming and I will speak sharply if I need to. You know, in the Bible, a man of God is supposed to be a nice guy.

He's supposed to be sweet and gentle and humble. He's supposed to try to, he's supposed to kindly deal with the people. He's supposed to treat the older people in the church like they were his mom or his dad and the younger people like they were his brother or his sister.

He's supposed to be a nice guy. And Paul was a nice guy. But that's no excuse for you to get away with sin. And Paul writes them as their spiritual father. And he says, clean up. Live out who you are.

[8 : 25] Quit doing this junk. Quit playing games. Get real. Be what you're supposed to be. He says in verse 10, lest being present, I should use sharpness according to the power which the Lord has given me to edification.

You see, Paul never wanted to hurt them. He never wanted to tear them down. He never wanted to hurt them in any way. Paul wanted to see them grow. Can I tell you, you don't grow spiritually playing with sin.

You don't grow spiritually allowing sin in your life. Did you know that fornication ought not be mentioned among us?

Did you know that in our society today, sex outside of marriage is almost like a common thing. And it can almost sound like it's accepted in church. Kid is never accepted with God.

You ought to say amen right there. It is never accepted with God. There is never a place for anybody to have sexual relations outside of a man and a woman who are married.

[9 : 27] Never having sex with other people. Never having an adulterous relationship. Never even participating in pornography. Which would be the same deal.

You're just watching it. We're going to be clean. Paul didn't want to hurt them. He wanted to use this letter and he wanted them to get right. He said, I'm not there yet. And when I get there, man, I would just love to have a sweet homecoming.

I can't explain to you. And you don't understand this from my point of view. But I've lived my life a long time. Traveling a lot. I spent 20 years of my life as a missionary.

I know what it's like to leave the country with the highest of things. When I left Peru in December of 1990, the guys stayed up almost all night with us.

We walked the streets and they cried and they wept that I would be leaving. And I came back after six months to visit them, left Biddy in the States. And I went back and boy, everything was so great. And I was so proud of them. And when I landed, I found out that over the year they had fallen in sin.

[10 : 33] And boy, there was a sweet love relationship between us. I mean, everybody knew about Austin or Guillermo and all of his buddies. And they knew how to love relationship he had.

And they knew how I loved them and how they loved me. But over the next few months, I had to use sharpness on a regular basis. I found out about fornication and I just went straight to them and I said, this is the evidence established in the mouth of two or three witnesses.

This does not stand. I've walked into their store and said, let's go get a cup of coffee and let's sit down for a minute. And they sat down with me to drink a cup of coffee.

And they knew the second they saw me walk in the door. Because when we were sitting there, I just looked and I said, I heard and I want to hear your side. And he said, I knew the second she walked in, that's what you were here for.

And Paul says, I do not want to use sharpness. But I do want you living for God. And I will take a stand. And if I lose friends, I'll lose friends.

[11 : 34] If I lose friends, I'll lose friends. He knew he had the power and authority of being God's man to challenge them and to use that authority.

But it wasn't to hurt them. It was to build them up. He wanted their meeting to be a sweet one, not a stern one. Because he would have to deal with sin. Jeff just went back to Argentina.

You'd have to understand what it's like to go into a place and carve out of nothing a bunch of lost people to see them get saved and see them formed into churches and get you several pastors and leaders. And you'd have to understand what it's like to get off the airplane and have people waiting on you that have been saved and out of your ministry and you're just deeply in love with them.

And it's like a homecoming. I mean, you're hugging and you're excited and you're emotional and they're just so excited to see you and you're so excited to see them.

And Paul said, when I come back, that's how I want it to be with us. I do not want to come to that church and have to say, I hear there's fornication going on here. I remember I met with the guys and I told the guys, they were in leadership at our church, and I told them, I said, you're going to have to resign.

[12 : 43] And so on a Sunday night when there were less people there, one by one they went up to the front and they said, while the pastor's been gone, I have failed morally in my life.

I have failed spiritually in my life. And I'm stepping down from the position that God has placed me in. And after the service, one of the men, during that next week, he said to people, he said, the pastor doesn't understand young people must sow their wild oats.

And he ought to understand that. But over the next few months, I used that power to build them up. And those guys were, almost all of them were restored to serving God and living for God and doing something for God.

And I know the hurt. I know what it was like to feel like I was totally alone in that room. And I know what it was like to be the white boy in that room full of Peruvians.

But I know what it was like that night to be the only guy who would stand up and say, this is wrong and I won't put up with it. And either you will deal with it or you will deal without me.

[13 : 45] But Paul said, I'm coming. And I fully expect you to get right. Could I just say vision ought never be a church that tolerates sin. Vision ought never be a church that just says, that's a little fornication, okay with us.

Hey, there's a guy sleeping with his daddy's wife. Not a big problem with us. Hey, this guy's messing around with porn. It's okay with us. We ought to be a holy church. Now look at Paul's closing remarks, if you would. Verses 11 down to 14.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect. Be of good comfort. Be of one mind. Live in peace. And the love and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen. Now when I was a young kid, and we used to write letters, not text or emails.

I would write letters to my friends that were Christian friends. They weren't in the ministry, but they were some of the young people back at my church when I was at college.

[14 : 48] And I would always look for one of Paul's closing remarks that I found to be extremely sweet. And I have used this one right here. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Amen. And that's the sweet attitude. But do you notice what he challenges them to do? He said, be mature. It says in the verse, be perfect. Well, that's the idea of being complete.

It's the idea of growing up. It's the idea of being mature. And you ought to, each of you, you know, you need to be self-feeders. That means that you learn how to feed yourself spiritually.

You men need to take leadership roles in your home. You need to say, I'm going to lead my family to do some Bible reading and some praying. I'm going to lead my home so that we will have a blessing before we eat and ask, thank God for the food.

I'm going to help my children and know right from wrong for what the word of God says. I'm going to lead my home to be at church. You see, when you have grace and there's not a preacher beating you on the head, you know, still, you know, dad, you ought to be saying children, we need to be at the house of God.

[15 : 54] We're mature. We're leaders. And I'm going to take my family to church. And, you know, I'm not going to use every, every excuse like an immature person to get out of it. He says that they were to quit fighting and have the same heart and the same mind about the Lord and the things of the Lord.

The church has been divided. Two books. We've heard about them being divided. They were arguing. They weren't arguing over petty things. They were arguing over even major things. They were arguing over the gifts. They were arguing over who was a better preacher and fighting over some silly stuff.

They were to live in peace and fighting contention simply is not God's will for us. We're to be in love with Jesus. I found out a long time ago, if a husband is in harmony with Jesus and a wife is in harmony with Jesus, they'll make music together.

And every marriage where the husband's not right with God, there won't be music, even if the wife is right. And if the wife's right and the husband's not or vice versa, it doesn't work. The real key to a strong marriage is I want to be right with God.

As I'm right with God, I will be right with my wife. And as I'm right with God, I will treat my spouse right. It's not a matter of my relationship with Betty. It's a matter of my relationship with Jesus. And Paul says, y'all grow up and quit the fighting and the fussing.

[17 : 12] God's comforting you. I want you to work at this. And he says, hey, quit the fighting. Get the same heart. Live at peace. Quit the fighting and fussing and the contention. It's not God's will for us. Be of comfort, a good comfort.

Be of one mind. Live in peace. Live in peace. Could I ask you where you are spiritually? Could I ask if you are walking with him and you're in harmony with him and you're right with him and you're examining him?

You're mature. Paul says, be perfect. Be mature. You know, in the Bible, the idea and the philosophy, biblical philosophy or biblical truth is not that I'm supposed to be some of a great guy.

Who knows God and walks with God on a different plane than you are or than you do. The truth is we're all supposed to be mature. I may be the one that God has allowed to have a little bit of a gift to teach.

And I may be the guy that's doing the teaching. But everybody in this room is mature and they're walking with God and they're trying to serve God. We're on equal planes. That's why you don't call me anything but brother. You don't have to have any reference to me that puts me higher than you.

[18 : 16] Awkward verse. But in verse 12, it says, greet one another with a holy kiss. They were to express their love for each other. Jeff was just in Argentina.

You went to Argentina. They got the holy kiss down there. Men kiss men and men kiss women and everybody kisses everybody. And when you get to church, when you get to church, you never stick your hand out.

At his church, if they stick their hand out and shake hands with you, it's like, I don't know you. I don't like you. I don't trust you. So we just have this kind of relationship. But when Jeff got there, you can mark this down. He leaned in and they leaned in and the men laid their cheek on his cheek and they go and make a sound.

And that's going on in Arabic places. It's not a kiss on the mouth or anything. But it is. I love you. And I openly, willingly express my love for you. We're family.

Corinthians, you've been fighting and fussing. Stop it. And greet each other with a holy kiss. Come in and give that strong hug to each other. Shake hands in a way that every culture's got their own way.

[19 : 17] But you express love to each other. You're in the family. Express love. And I would like to call your attention to verse 13. And I wish you'd just put a circle around it.

I love the way Paul says, all the saints salute you. Just quickly, could I ask you, do you really think that was a bunch of statues around the building that were sending their greetings?

Do you think that was a bunch of dead people that are in heaven? And Paul writes the letter and says, oh, by the way, all the people already died and gone to heaven and they turned into saints. I got it. I'm sending their greeting. You know what he was saying was, be perfect, your saints.

Be perfect. The saints over here, send greetings to the saints over there. If you're a born again person, if you have been born again, you are a saint. You have a new identity.

He doesn't say here. Notice, just interesting. He doesn't say here the saved centers of Corinth salute you. He doesn't say the saved guys that used to do wrong that finally got right salute you.

[20 : 25] And every one of us, the word saints, a pretty strong word. We use saint, even us, even we Baptists are a little like saint. That's a holy guy. Ain't talking about me. Talking about a saint in the Bible.

Talking about you. So be who you are. Live out who you are. This is a room full of saints. And by the way, you're either a saint or you ain't.

If you're a saint, you're a born again Christian. If you're a saint, your name is written in heaven. If you're a saint, you have eternal life. If you're not a saint, you don't have eternal life.

You say, well, I'm not really living that good, so I'm not a saint. I'm saved, but I'm not quite up to saint level yet. Paul didn't say here, all the really good people, saints, salute you.

Paul said the saints salute you. That's your new identity. And Paul sends the blessings of the Lord, the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

[21 : 27] I would like to end the book of 2 Corinthians. It's always kind of almost like a sadness with me that I finished. I thought about dragging it out just a couple more weeks just so I could enjoy 2 Corinthians.

It's also a happy time. We finished another book that you've at least plowed your way through and you've read some verses. But as you finish this book, man, you should have learned some lessons. And if you leave here knowing more about 2 Corinthians in your head and you leave here knowing more Bible facts and more Bible stories and you say, I can even remember what happens in what chapter because we stayed in it so long.

And I learned a whole lot of stuff here, but it didn't reach down to here and it didn't change your heart and you don't mature in Christ. I'm failing and I'm not getting the truth to you. We don't study the Bible to know the Bible.

We study the Bible for God to do a work in our hearts and to perfect us and to make us into who we are. It is spiritual food that takes me from childhood to spiritual maturity.

And as I study this, I hope you will be mature. I hope you're growing up. I hope if you were to stop and go back and find the first day I preached out of 2 Corinthians, you would say, you know, I've seen God mature me in some areas of my life in the last 35 messages or so that we've had in 2 Corinthians.

[22 : 43] I've seen God growing me. It might not have been noticeable if I look about last week or even a month ago, but as God's dealt with my heart, I see I've grown. I've learned some things. I am maturing in Christ.

I love it. This is the church. He started out writing in the first Corinthians and said, I can't write to you like as though you were spiritual because you're a bunch of carnal babies. And he ends the book saying, be perfect.

Be perfect. I'm two books in now. I'm not talking to babies. I'm telling you, go be perfect. Go be mature. Go live out who you are. Where are you in your spiritual walk?

Where are you in your spiritual walk? You do not have to be overnight everything you ought to be. But I will tell you this. And there's no crisis event that's going to completely revolutionize your life overnight except salvation.

But I will tell you this. Real Christians grow. Real Christians mature. Real Christians see the hand of God and how he worked in their life over the years.

[23 : 51] Where are you on the maturity scale? Father in heaven, I love you. And I pray that you would bring honor to your name. And I pray that you would deal with our hearts.

And I pray, God, that there would be Christians that would say, I have been messing with sin. And I have not been making, I've not been in harmony with the Lord. And tonight I want to get my life right. And I want to leave 2 Corinthians growing and maturing.

God, would you do a lot of work in our lives? God, there might be somebody here tonight that's not sure they're born again. Not sure they'd go to heaven if they died. And I'm praying, God, that you would help them tonight. To get the security of their salvation.

To understand for sure they are saved. They could be assured of their salvation. God, would you do a work. You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church.

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