

## SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Since the original sin was committed by a sinless person, up until that point, (the first Adam) and the price for sin is death, mankind could only be redeemed of sin through the substitutionary sacrificial death of a perfect, sinless person. All people are sinners and fall far short of God's standard of perfection. Only Jesus (the last Adam), who was without sin and was perfectly man and perfectly God, was qualified as a proper sacrifice for all mankind.

To live eternally with God, we must believe in Jesus's sacrificial death on the cross for our sins, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven and His promise to return for His believers. Also we must earnestly repent of our sins (confess our sins to God, truly be sorry for sinning, and do our best to stop sinful acts).

Once we truly believe in God, accept the gospel of Jesus to be true, repent and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are said to be "reborn in Christ". We are "born again" but this time into God's kingdom with God as our heavenly Father and granted eternal life as one of His children. At this point, when we are "saved", God instills the Holy Spirit into us to be our guide, teacher and connection to God. Therefore we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and transformed into a new creation in Christ and begin a new Spirit-filled life. True Christians strive to develop a Christ-like character since they have inherited, through the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit which is: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self control.

When we open our heart and truly accept Jesus Christ into our lives, we should desire God's will to be done in our lives instead of wanting to rely on our own will. We must put our trust in Jesus Christ instead of trusting in our own good deeds or works. Although none of our good works do anything to save us, good works should follow naturally as we experience the love of Christ. However, according to the Bible, someday everyone will stand before Jesus, our judge in heaven, and be held accountable for and be judged for our decisions and actions while alive on earth. Although true Christians will not lose their salvation due to their sins, they will be punished for their unrighteousness (their sins) and/or be rewarded for their righteous decisions, actions, and deeds. Because of their sin, no person deserves to be saved. None of their good deeds do anything to save them. They are saved only by God's grace through their faith in Jesus. Therefore it does not matter how "good" a person has been if he does not believe that Jesus Christ is his Lord and Savior. Unbelievers, or the "unsaved," will be judged for their unbelief and will be sentenced to hell which is eternal separation from God.

When someone is truly "born again", his entire attitude and motivation are changed. He desires to live in a way that will honor the Lord Jesus and draw others to Him, in thankfulness for Christ's love and sacrifice for him. If his motivation is still basically self-centered, there is no real evidence that he has been truly converted. Also if one habitually succumbs to temptation and finds sin still dominating his life this indicates that he is probably not really led by the Holy Spirit and therefore probably not really "saved." Christians must humbly repent and trust God for more strength to overcome future temptations. Although Christians will be subject to mocking and persecution by unbelievers, spiritually mature Christians will find joy in life by totally trusting in Jesus. A true Christian is not embarrassed but proud to be called a Christian.

As stated by Morris and Clark in their book *The Bible Has The Answer*, "sanctification (a dedication to God and the consequent separation from all things profane) is essential to successful Christian living. A Christian must separate himself from the sinful works of unbelief. No portion of the Christian's life should escape this dedication. Some Christians never experience spiritual growth or victory because they are not willing to count Christ more valuable than the follies of sin. Sanctification is progressively attained and spiritual growth results from the Christian's obedience, renunciation of filthiness, Bible study and prayer, and attentive learning from true ministers of the Word. Since God sanctifies through His Word, the Christian who neglects his Bible can not grow well spiritually.

Being "reborn" is only the beginning. There is a vast difference between being just "born again" and being spiritually mature. As we are born a baby and have to grow into adulthood, we must also experience spiritual growth to develop and maintain a strong faith in God and Jesus. Since we live in a secular world with daily reminders and temptations of non-Christian ethics and morals, I have learned that to become a strong believer and Christian, we must pray regularly every day, constantly study the Word of God (through talking with other believers, reading, tapes/CD's/DVD's, and / or Bible studies), trust in the Lord and act on His word.