

Spirituality and Maturity



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In our previous two sessions, we have been discussing the meaning of spiritual formation and, in particular, what do we mean by *spiritual*. What is the object of the formation that we're discussing? We were focusing on secular spirituality, recognizing that we live in a world which sees itself today as being very spiritual. But hopefully we've come to realize, having looked at the biblical ideas and concepts concerning spiritual, that that which the world calls *spiritual* and that which Scripture calls *spiritual* are not the same. When we talk about spiritual formation from a Christian context, from a Christian perspective, we're talking about the relationship which a believer has with the living God through Jesus Christ; that relationship having its very basis and foundation as well as its continuation upon the Christ event, the cross, and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Before we continue in our study of some of the biblical ideas related to spiritual formation, an excursus at this point would be valuable. We need to ask ourselves: How do we explain, then, those *spiritual* experiences, so-called, of those from the world—those experiences which we see in the New Age movement and other movements outside of Christianity which do seem to transcend material realities—those episodes, those events that occur in individuals' lives that cannot be explained from an empirical perspective totally. Although I'm not offering what I'm about to say as the complete and total answer, I do think that it provides us some explanation and some insight as we look at the experiences of those involved in secular spirituality of various types. And that has to do with various modes of human consciousness.

Arthur Deikman, in the early 80s, wrote a book dealing with physiological psychology in which he suggested that there are two basic modes of human consciousness. The first he described as the active or objective mode. And this is the mode of human consciousness in which we operate most of our time. This is the mode of human consciousness in which we organize knowledge,

we manipulate our environment. It's the mode by which we bring about physical results, all of those physical things leading to our biological survival. There's an emphasis in this mode of consciousness on the distinction between the individual and his or her environment. This is the mode of consciousness that you operate in perhaps 98 percent of the time. It's the mode of consciousness hopefully that you're in right now.

There's a second mode of consciousness that Deikman proposed. He calls it the passive- perceptive mode. In this mode there is a passive intake of the environment. The emphasis in this mode of consciousness is on the unity of the individual with his or her environment and a submerging of one's identity and awareness of that identity. Now these two modes of consciousness provide useful models for us to explain and to understand at least some of what we see going on in these secular, spiritual experiences—those so-called spiritual experiences outside of Christianity which do seem to transcend material realities.

Now Deikman and others since him have studied this from not only a psychological perspective but a physiological perspective. And as you study the various physiological responses involved in these two forms of human consciousness, you can see some differentiation. For example, in the active-objective mode as we've indicated, the being, the individual focuses on manipulating their environment, whereas in the passive-perceptive mode (and this, by the way, would be the mode characteristic of certain mystical trances and other types of meditative experiences), rather than manipulation of environment, the focus is on the intake of environment.

Now as a result of the two types of modes of consciousness, we see two different types of physiological systems dominant. In the active-objective mode, the striate muscle system is dominant, whereas in the passive-perceptive mode, the sensory perceptual system is dominant. Similarly we see the nervous system differentiation. In the active-objective mode we have the sympathetic nervous system most prominent—the sympathetic nervous system being that which controls your voluntary responses; whereas in the passive-perceptive mode, we see the sympathetic nervous system being subdued and the parasympathetic system more prominent. And there are a host of other characteristics. And the active-objective mode baseline tension is increased; whereas in the passive-perceptive mode, baseline tension is decreased. In the active-objective mode, we have the attention focused; whereas

in the passive-perceptive mode, attention is diffused. There is a heightened boundary perception in the active-objective mode, a decreased boundary perception in the passive-perceptive mode. Shape and meaning have predominance over color and texture in the active-objective mode, whereas color and texture have the predominance over shape and meaning in the passive-perceptive mode.

Well, why discuss this? I think it does provide us again some insight into some of those things that are happening in secular, so-called *spiritual* experiences—those things which don't seem to be normal which are beyond our normal experience. The trances, the meditative states, and the mystical experiences can be explained and are explained, in part if not in whole, by these different levels or different modes of human consciousness. Tart has written a book that was published in the late 80s called *Transpersonal Psychologies* in which he investigates seven world spiritual systems from this perspective of different human consciousness. *Transpersonal Psychologies*.

So that as we look at those secular spiritual events and so forth, we need to recognize that they are not all supernatural. Now that's not to discount the supernatural aspect. We are also aware that in reality there is the demonic, the satanic influence as well, that we see in some of these so-called spiritual experiences. And I don't go into this in any great depth or with the intent for you as a student to go into it in any great depth, but just to mention it as we consider some of those secular spiritual experiences. For us, as we talk about spiritual formation, we realize once again that what we are talking about is the relationship that we as believers have with the living God through Jesus Christ.

Now as we discuss spiritual formation, implied within spiritual formation is some type of goal, some type of end, or something towards which we are moving, something towards which we are being formed. And so that brings us to the next major consideration that we want to have in this course. And that has to do with this end or the object of our formation. What are we moving towards? And what we will do is now consider an important concept, primarily in the New Testament, that deals with this. When we talk about *spiritual formation*, we talk about *spiritual maturity*. Typically that's what we think about in terms of that towards which we are moving, that towards which we are being formed, or that towards which we are growing.

So we want to spend some time now looking at a word that we find throughout the New Testament that's a key word for this concept of maturity and for helping us to understand that towards which we're being formed. And that's the Greek word *teleios*. *Teleios* being translated in our New Testament translations as *perfection* or *maturity* provides a useful starting point for us as we now try to begin to construct a biblical model of the process and the product of spiritual formation. As we look at this word, let's begin by first of all considering the lexical meanings of the word—a lexical study. And then following that we'll look a bit at how the word is used. And then from that see what we can discern or what we can synthesize and put together in terms of what we mean by those who are *spiritually mature*. As we look then at the lexical meanings of the word *teleios*, we realize that it comes from the same word group as *telos* and that this word group has as its origin, or its beginning meanings, the culminating point at which one stage ends and another begins. The root words there had that basic meaning where we would look at a point where a stage had come to an end, had come to fruition, had come to maturity, had reached its goal, and then another begins. Later the word group came to denote simply a goal or an end.

Now we find the adjective form, *teleios*—referring to the completion of either physical or intellectual development—when the word is used in classical literature to refer to humanity. In fact, the passive of the verb form *teleioo* can refer to human adulthood and of plants and animals that have reached a fully grown stage. And so the idea here is that of a goal, that of an end, that of something that has been accomplished and completed, fulfilled. The word can also refer to maturity in the sense of that which is whole, that which is full, that which is perfect, actualized, efficacious, or supreme. And here the meaning is not so much a goal that has been realized. The emphasis is not there but rather the emphasis is on the wholeness, the perfection of that which has reached its mature state. And again by perfection, we're not necessarily implying ethical perfection. Although in its classical, philosophical use *teleios* certainly pointed to that direction—as Plato and others talked about—*teleios* in the sense of describing full humanity with an orientation to what is worthwhile and ethically good. However, the word is not limited to that. Often in the sense of being perfect, it has the idea of something being just right, being the perfect example of what it was intended to be.

Well, as we move from the classical usage to biblical usage, we want to look first of all at the way that the word *teleios* was used

in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. For here we find the usage that I feel most influences the New Testament. The New Testament, in its usage of this word, draws more heavily from the Septuagint usage than it does the classical Greek usage. And in the Septuagint, we see that the usage focuses predominantly in the sense of wholeness rather than a goal or an end to be achieved. But *teleios* in the Septuagint looks at that which is whole, that which is unblemished or undivided. We see it used to translate the Hebrew words to describe the sacrifices, for example. You'll recall that in the Old Testament passages dealing with the sacrifices that in our English translation they have to be whole, they have to be undivided, unblemished, and perfect. And the word used to translate the Hebrew words there is often, so it's something that is whole, something which is unblemished or undivided. It's also used in the Septuagint to describe the heart which is wholly and completely turned towards God or the man who has bound himself over wholly and completely to God.

So this is the idea that we see in the Septuagint. Rather than the emphasis which we see more in the classical Greek sense on a goal or an end, *teleios*, as it's used in the Septuagint, focuses more on the concept of wholeness, on the concept of unity, on that which is undivided and unblemished. If there is the idea of perfection, it's that which is perfect for what it was intended to be, that which has reached a complete state, a whole state, a state of maturity that is characterized by fullness. Now as I've indicated earlier, the New Testament usage, especially Paul, seems to follow more of the Septuagint usage than the classical. As we see it used anthropologically in terms of individual human development, we see that it refers to that state or that case where a human has grown up and is complete and perfect—having reached the adult state, the man who has reached full maturity, the individual who has come of age—being described as *teleios*.

Generally, however, it refers to that which is whole or entire in terms of not only humanity but other aspects of being as well. Now as we look at the ethical usage of the word in this light, we see that ethically, *teleios*—as it's used in the New Testament as contrasted to the classical Greek usage—never seems to point to a goal of ethical perfection which is to be gradually realized by degree, so that there is some plateau of ethical perfection which we achieve and we can say, "Well, we have arrived. We are the *teleios*. We are mature." Nor do we see it used in a too great ideal of ethical perfection as we see used in some of the Greek philosophers.

So we can conclude from this that *teleios*, in its usage in the New Testament, does not denote a qualitative endpoint of human endeavor, some perfect state towards which we are laboring. Now this is important, because as we're talking about spiritual formation, as we're talking about that towards which we're striving, we need to realize that the New Testament picture does not include some final state—that there are a class of Christians who can walk around saying, “Well, we are *teleios*. We are mature in a final, completed sense.” We have achieved some ideal state so that we have two classes of Christians, if you would, those who are the mature, those who have arrived finally, and those who have not arrived. Rather we see that it talks about the undivided wholeness, completeness of a person in terms of their behavior. And often, as we're going to see, the word seems to refer to the anticipation in time of eschatological wholeness and how that anticipation should impact actual present-day living. So that Christian life in the New Testament as we see it described in terms of *teleios* is not projected idealistically as a struggle for perfection. But it's projected more eschatologically as the wholeness which a person is both given and promised in Christ. Now that will become clear as we continue our discussion.

Let's talk now a bit about, about spiritual maturity and how that is characterized, or how it is used with respect to spiritual formation in the New Testament. Having looked now at the lexical usage of the word in general, we've looked at the classical usage. We've looked at the usage in the Septuagint and then the general usage in the New Testament. Now let's focus a bit more and look and see the usage of the word as it is applied to spiritual maturity. Now again let me remind you that the basic idea in the New Testament, especially in this area, is with reference to that which is whole, that which is complete, that which is perfect. And by perfect we mean that which is just right, that which is everything that it was intended to be. We see it used in several ways.

First of all, we see it used in the sense of having reached an end or purpose which was intended. And often we see this used to describe things. For example, in James 1:4, we read, “And let endurance have its perfect result so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” “Allow patience to have its finished work,” we might say. “Allow patience to achieve its complete and final state so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” Notice the emphasis here now in the usage of the word on the wholeness, the completeness, that is used to describe this. Romans 12:2 is another example of this word used in describing

something and used to describe it as having reached an end or achieving, rather, a purpose that was intended. And in Romans 12:2, this very familiar portion of Scripture, we read, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” The perfect will of God, the will of God which is everything that it ought to be; a complete, a whole, an entire will is the idea of the word that we have here. Then over in Hebrews 9—in which the writer of Hebrews is describing, or comparing, the earthly tabernacle to the heavenly tabernacle—says, “But when Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. That is to say not of this creation”—the more *teleios* tabernacle, the heavenly tabernacle, being the tabernacle that is complete and whole and all of what tabernacles ought to be, having complete *tabernacleness*. To borrow a little bit of platonic idea here, it would be the ideal tabernacle, a full tabernacle.

Well, in addition to seeing the word used to describe things and describing them in terms of having achieved an end or a purpose that was intended, we also see the word now used to describe people and describing people in the sense of being of age, fully grown, and mature. For example in 1 Corinthians 14:20, Paul says, “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.” (Be *teleios*.) Now we need to be careful here that we don’t confuse the metaphor that Paul is constructing. He’s just drawing a simple picture. He’s saying, “In your thinking don’t be like children. But in your thinking be like adults, be mature. Be fully grown.” Hebrews 5 uses the same type of metaphor. In verse 14, he says, “But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” Now he’s talking about spirituality here, but he’s using a simple metaphor to describe spirituality. He talks about babies who drink only milk and then mature adults who eat solid food. And so the idea here again is of someone that is of age, fully grown and mature. Well, it’s important for us now to have seen these passages. And they’re representative, by the way. Let me encourage you, in the time that you have on your own to study, to get a concordance down and to trace this word through *teleios*. It’s a critical word and you need to get a sense, a feel for the overall usage, for the semantic domain of the word, to get an idea about what Paul is meaning, and other New Testament writers, when they use the word to refer to spirituality and spiritual formation.

And so a third category, then, that we see: We do see the word used to describe Christians in a special way. And here we see it speaking of the maturity that we have in Christ— in terms of the completeness and the wholeness that is ours in Christ. And so we see how it is derived from these prior two usages that we've talked about, but now applied in the spiritual realm—and in the spiritual realm to talk about that relationship that we have with God through Jesus Christ and to give us some further insight into particular aspects of that relationship. For example, a representative passage would be Colossians 1:28 in which Paul says—as he's describing his ministry among them—he says, “We proclaim him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete [*teleios*] in Christ”—present everyone perfect, mature, whole, complete in Jesus Christ someday: the purpose of Paul's teaching ministry.

Now between this passage and our next passage, we see illustrated a particular tension that becomes associated with this concept throughout the New Testament. It's a tension that you've seen described in many books and other places as the already-not-yet tension that is so characteristic of the New Testament. For example in Colossians 4:12, we see Paul using the word again but now using the word in an already sense. In Colossians 1:28, obviously, it was not yet. He wants someday to present us all *teleios*. Here in Colossians 4:12, he says, “Epaphras, who was one of your number, a bond slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand *teleios* and fully assured in all the will of God.” Now again we see some ethical implications. We see that Paul is referring directly and explicitly to the relationship that we have with God through Jesus Christ. And he's saying it as Epaphras's prayer that you would stand right now *teleios* (complete, whole before God); and so we see again him speaking of the Christian, speaking of the maturity that we have and the sense of completeness and wholeness that is ours in Jesus Christ.

As kind of a summary and then anticipating and looking ahead, we could say that with respect to spirituality, *teleios* refers to a state of spiritual completeness, a state of spiritual wholeness and/or maturity that we somehow obtain through our relationship with Jesus Christ. So this gives us an idea of that which is the goal, or the object, of the spiritual formation process. Now to gain some further insight into what we mean by this—what we mean by this state of spiritual completeness, spiritual wholeness, spiritual

maturity that we obtain through our relationship with Christ—let's look now at some of the characteristics that we see of the one who is spiritually complete, perfect, or mature. And again we'll look at passages using *teleios*, but I also want to add now passages that deal with growth, because that's an important aspect of spiritual formation. And as we've seen now, both the physical as well as the spiritual usages of this word *teleios*—growing towards maturity or the state of maturity that implies—it presumes the whole idea of growth. So we want to incorporate some growth passages now as well.

There are four characteristics that we want to talk about at this point. The first has to do with the knowledge and understanding of the significance of God's will. Now we've already looked at Colossians 1:28, in which Paul talked about presenting all of those that he was ministering to *teleios* before God. And remember, he said that that would happen as a result of his teaching. That was why he was teaching. That was why he was bringing them to an understanding and knowledge of God's will. And, of course again, another passage that we looked at earlier was Hebrews 5:11–14, talking about the importance of knowing God's Word and understanding the significance of His Word being for those who are the *teleios*.

A third passage which is related to this is 1 Peter 2:2, looking at verse 1 to get the context. Peter says, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." So here he talks about the means of growth. Now he doesn't use the word *teleios*, but here he says that the means for growth is the craving and the hunger for the Word of God. Now here we need to be careful. Peter is using a metaphor that has been used in other passages. We saw in 1 Corinthians and in Hebrews the baby metaphor being used to describe just the opposite. Here he's not really focusing on the baby as much as he is the hunger and the thirst that is characteristic of a baby, the craving that a baby has. And perhaps you have children. Those that do know there's nothing that has more intensity than a newborn baby that is hungry. Their entire being is focused on satiating that hunger, on taking in whatever is there to meet that desire and satisfy that hunger. And Peter is saying that is the type of hunger and the desire that we should have for the pure milk of the Word. And again now, he's not talking about milk of the Word in the same sense that the writer of Hebrews is talking. He's merely using that as a metaphor to

describe the Word that we should take in that would produce and lead to the growth that is so necessary for us.

We see this also over in 2 Peter 3, as Peter talks again about the growth that should be characteristic of our life. He ties it to the knowledge and understanding. In 2 Peter 3:18, he says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.” Spiritual growth must be accomplished in the context of increased understanding and knowledge of the significance of God’s will. So there’s one important characteristic that is associated with this idea of spiritual completeness, perfection, maturity, and wholeness.

The second characteristic has to do with a life which is consistent with God’s will. If we stop only with the knowledge of God’s will, then we will basically have a form of Christian Gnosticism. There is more implied in the New Testament concerning the characteristics of those who are the spiritually complete. And that has to do, secondly then, with a life consistent with God’s will. A passage here which illustrates that is, again, a passage that we talked about earlier: Romans 12:1–2. Paul says, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” In this passage we see both ideas tied together, the renewing of the mind which, of course, presupposes a knowledge and an understanding of God’s will. But it doesn’t stop with that renewal. In fact, what Paul shows is that the renewal of the mind is necessary for the living—and the lifestyle—to be able to present our bodies as living and holy sacrifices, to resist being conformed to the world, to be transformed. And so the emphasis there is on a life consistent with God’s will but that life coming, flowing naturally, out of a knowledge of His will.

In Colossians 4:12, again a verse that we looked at earlier, in which Paul was talking about Epaphras’s prayer, that he was praying that the people at Colossae would be able to stand perfect. And we know that Paul’s usage of that word *stand* refers to lifestyle. What he is saying there is to stand against sin, to resist temptation, and to live a life which was consistent in every way with God’s will. James also talks about this life and the importance of it in describing the *teleios* individual. In James 3:2, he says, “For we

all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a *teleios* man [a perfect man], able to bridle the whole body as well.” And here he gives a specific example of lifestyle, dealing with our mouth, with what we say. And he says if he doesn’t stumble in that way, then he is *teleios*. He is whole, he is complete. James 1:4, a verse again that we talked about earlier, the perfect work of patience— again pointing out to the necessity and the role of lifestyle—a life which is consistent with God’s will as being a characteristic of those who are spiritually complete.

Two characteristics: knowledge of God’s will and the life consistent with God’s will. However, if we stop here—and these are the only aspects of our spiritual formation, the only aspects of that which we’re going to call *maturity*—then we’re in danger of not lapsing into a Christian Gnosticism but into Christian legalism, because we will have neglected the third aspect, or the third characteristic, of those who are *teleios*. And that has to do with love, loving as God loves. In 1 John 4:12 and 18, John says, “No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.” Love is a very central and critical part of the whole Christian life. In fact as we’re going to see as we develop this course, it is the central and the critical aspect of the Christian life. We’ll have more to say about that later. But what we need to realize here is that it is love which keeps the previous two characteristics from deteriorating into a dead legalism.

In 1 John 4:18, John goes on to say, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment; and the one who fears [that is the one who is not loving] is not perfected in love [is not made *teleios*].” And here we have the verb form *teleo*, so again the importance of love. And this essential nature of love, in the Christian experience—and its permanent role in the important and significant part of it—is illustrated very beautifully in 1 Corinthians 13 in which Paul talks about Christianity and the most excellent way. And here again he doesn’t really talk about being mature or talk about growth. But the whole description is focusing on the whole and complete Christian life. In 1 Corinthians 13, in the first three verses, Paul says, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.” All of these things, which

the church at Corinth were taking as essential to the Christian life, Paul was saying are worthless apart from love; loving being a very important aspect of that which is mature. And in fact, it's the last thing he says in verse 10, "But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with." And in verse 13, "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three. But the greatest of these is love." So three characteristics: knowledge of God's will, life consistent with God's will, and loving as God loves.

The fourth characteristic that we see as we look at the New Testament description of growth and maturity, the *teleios* individual, has to do with continued growth. And this is an interesting concept that we see. In Philippians 3:12, Paul says, "Not that I have already obtained it [referring to the resurrection from the dead] or have already become [*teleios*] perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Notice the picture that Paul is painting here. He says, "I do not count myself to have arrived. I'm not at any spiritual plateau of maturity where I can say I have now arrived. I am now perfect." You need to realize that this letter to the church at Philippi was written by Paul the old man. This was one of the last things that he wrote that we have in the New Testament. It's one of the prison epistles. This isn't Paul the new Christian. This is Paul the elderly Christian statesman. This is Paul the apostle. This is the individual that many throughout Asia, if they were to say, "Who is the godliest, the most pious individual you know?" They would say, "Oh, Paul the apostle." And this same Paul says, "I have not become *teleios*, but I'm pressing on." I like to call this Paul's scramble mode. It's almost as if he were trying—it's like scrambling up a rocky hillside in which you take two steps forward and you're sliding back but you're constantly striving to get up that hillside. Scrambling is the picture that Paul describes here. And in verse 12, he says, "I have not already become *teleios*."

Now look with me at verse 15. He says, "Let us therefore, as many as are *teleios*, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by the same standard to which we have attained." Do you see what Paul is saying here? He is saying that everyone who is *teleios* realizes they are not *teleios*. The mature are those who realize they are not mature. They have not arrived yet. You see

that negatively illustrated over in 1 Corinthians 2. Here Paul says, “And when I came to you, brethren,” (verse 1) “I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. . . . Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.”

Many commentators believe, and I agree with them, that Paul is dealing with a problem that has come out of the mystery religions that had influenced some of the Corinthians. And in those mystery religions, there was the idea of the initiate and then the *teleios* (the perfect). And when you’d gone through the process then you became one of the *teleios* (the perfect). And it appears as if they were bringing that into the church at Corinth. And, of course, one achieved this state through wisdom. And so there were those who were claiming to be the *teleios*, to be the mature, to be the perfect, in another sense. And so Paul said, “No, wait a minute. When I came to you I didn’t come to you with superiority of speech or this wisdom, as is similar to your mystery religions. Oh, we do speak of wisdom among those who are really *teleios*. But it’s not a wisdom of this age nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.” And then over in chapter 3, he brings it home, and he says “I, brethren,” (verse 1) “could not speak to you as spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ.” He said, you’re not *teleios*. You’re not mature. The very fact that you think you are mature shows that you’re not. And so when I came to you, I had to speak to you as babies. You see, they had missed the truth that Paul was teaching in Philippians—the idea that those who are truly mature realize they are not mature.

Four characteristics of maturity, four characteristics associated with Christian growth and *teleios* knowledge of God’s will, but we don’t stop there. We have a Christian Gnosticism, a life consistent with God’s will, but we can’t stop with those two or it could lapse into legalism, loving as God loves, and then finally the sense of continued growth, scrambling, striving, moving ever upward. The mature is the individual who realizes that they’re not mature, that there is still much to do, much growth.