

MARKS OF MATURITY (III)

Introduction

As we want our children to grow up; likewise our Father in heaven wants us, His children, to grow up and be mature.

In the past two weeks, we have learnt three marks of spiritual maturity namely, acting positively amid pressures, being sensitive to others, and being able to control his tongue.

Today, we are discussing the last two marks of spiritual maturity. We learn it in the book of James 4 and 5.

Mark 4: A MATURE CHRISTIAN BRINGS PEACE NOT PROBLEMS - James 4

The fourth test is: "DO WE BRING PEACE OR TROUBLE?"

Do we nurture problems or calm them down? Do we bring up the fire or put off the fire? Do we like to quarrel?

Paul explained that the congregation at Corinth, who liked to quarrel, were like babies because those who like quarreling are immature.

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" James 4:1

Selfishness is the source of a conflict. We may be able to notice that there is selfishness in every conflict. What is meant by selfishness? Selfishness means: "I want it my way!"

Remember that Pride only breeds quarrels (Proverbs 13:10).

In the tug-of-war competition, the match ends when one group gives up their hold of the rope. We have to learn to leave our selfishness and pride. That is called the peacemaker.

James 4:11-12 slandering causes conflicts.

The moment we slander others is similar to the time we invite conflicts.

At times, we cannot explain our own motivation, let alone the motivation of others. When we begin to suspect others, we are like standing on a thin ice with the risk of breaking the ice and we fall.

The Lord asks us not to judge others. There are three reasons why we must not judge others:

- Judging is the task of God. God is the Judge.
- Men are not omniscient but God is.
- We cannot grasp others' reasons; thus do not judge!

Those who judge other people are immature.

Mark 5: A MATURE CHRISTIAN IS PATIENT AND LOVES PRAYING **James 5**

James 5:7 says, "Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming."

James 5:16 says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

In James 5, the word "patient" is used four times and the word "prayer" is used seven times. The theme of James 5 is being patience and prayer.

We can identify one's maturity by looking at his patience and prayer life. Patience and prayer have to go at the same time. Those who pray a lot tend to be patient.

James used a farmer as the illustration in verse 7 onward because farmers have to wait very frequently. They sow seeds and they will not grow the next day but have to wait until the season. This means that we cannot be impatient and become a farmer.

Farmers will not dig the soil once in two days to see if the seeds grow...he will wait until the seeds grow.

The fifth test is: "HOW LONG CAN I WAIT?"

Can we wait for 13 years for an answer to our prayer? Can we wait in order for us to see the result of our work? Can we be patient while waiting and believing that God's time is the best and that God knows what the best is for us when we are in need of something but cannot get it? We have to differentiate between "no" and "not yet."

An immature person says, "I want it now! I don't want to wait!"

Thus, the fifth mark of maturity is that we have to be able to wait and do not insist.

Paul said he learnt to be content whatever the circumstances (Philippians 4:11)

There are always tests and trials in life. They always exist, and our work and ministry will never end. We have to learn from Paul to be content though there are things to do, problems to solve, targets to reach, needs to satisfy, conflicts to solve, and bills to pay.

It means we learn to wait and rejoice amid those kinds of things without saying, "I will be satisfied if I...; I will be happy if I..."

If we wait until all of them are solved in order to be content and happy, we will never be content and happy.

Which aspects have we not received the answer?

God may probably be waiting for us to grow to be mature before HE answers us!

Closing

It is not a matter of age, appearance, academics, the numbers of verses we memorize, the numbers of services we have attended and even the amount of time we have been Christians.

It is our character that shows our level of maturity.

There is Five points and five questions for the last three weeks are not meant to intimidate us but challenges to inspire us and teach us to be mature.

Do not look at a half-full glass, do not look at things that we have lost, but look at what remains with us and see how it can bless us. Do not be discouraged!

Sometimes we do not feel like doing the right things; we are to ask for the strength from the Lord to do the right thing according to His will so that we are not just following our emotion.

His grace is sufficient for us. Amen!