

Mutiny or Maturity

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INTRODUCTION

I have a brother who is in the Navy ROTC at the University of Michigan. When he completes his time there he plans to go through the Navy's training so that he can work on a submarine. While on vacation another brother of mine asked him there ever could be a mutiny on board a submarine, like there was in the movie *Crimson Tide*. My brother didn't know the answer.

When preparing for this message I thought back to that conversation. The mutiny that happened in the movie happened because two stubborn naval officers refused to cooperate with one another. The Captain of the submarine showed a certain amount of immaturity by not being willing to take direction from one of his subordinates.

Now this illustration does not fit perfectly with the point I'm trying to make, but it does help somewhat with trying to understand what it means to be a disciple. While the Captain in the movie eventually was proven wrong we have a Captain who is always right. Our Captain never makes a mistake, never errs in judgment and always knows the right thing to do. Even though He is the perfect Captain all of His subordinates (all of creation) has rebelled in mutiny against Him. Even we who believe in His supremacy, rebel in mutiny from time to time.

Our mutiny is based on our own immaturity, not on the inability of our Captain. Over a number of weeks, we have been looking at areas of the Christian life that will keep us in good standing with our God. Today we want to finalize this series by looking at the idea of maturity when it comes to our relationship with God. As we work on the 6 areas of discipleship and as we seek to keep them balanced, we will be living in obedience to Christ and will be mature Christians.

This whole discipleship series has been adapted from a discipleship manual that was developed by some friends of ours. In this concluding section they write:

“The apostle Paul wrote, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light... and find out what pleases the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:8, 9). Because we once lived in disobedience and had lives that were not pleasing to God, it is important that we work toward maturity in Christ-likeness. It is true that God sees us as perfect and blameless because of the blood of Christ that was shed for our sins. But it is also true that Christians are not given a perfect life style, only the means to live perfectly. It should be our lifelong goal to mature into the lifestyle that God intended for us as His children.” (Bruce and Ardi Erickson, Establish Manual)

What is Maturity?

When we talk about “growing up” we say someone is mature when they stop growing. Or someone can be mature when their childish behavior is weeded out and they begin to get on with life. A plant may come to maturity when we see the flowers or fruit that it produces.

The books to the Thessalonians are Paul’s words as he discipled the church at Thessalonica. In the original language of 1st Thessalonians Paul uses one word many times. It is the word *sterizo*, which means to establish, fix, set or strengthen. This is the goal of his discipleship of this church. It all has to do with maturity.

In 1st Thessalonians we can see 5 things that will be evidenced in the life of the person who is established in Christ.

A Testimony of a Changed Life – 1 Thess. 1:6-8 – These believers accepted Paul’s message in spite of suffering and they lived it out so well, they became examples to other churches Paul had worked with. Their faith was so strong that they became models for others to follow. Their lives were changed.

Accepted God’s Word as Truth – 1 Thess 2:13 – They recognized that the words Paul shared were truly the words of God. They showed this by not merely listening to the words, but by putting the words to work in their own lives.

Remained True When Tested – 1 Thess 3:3-6 – Thessalonica was the place where there was so much persecution that Paul had to be escorted out of town under the cover of darkness. The people remained, so Paul sent Timothy to check on them. Timothy’s report was a good one about their continued faith and love.

Has Learned Obedience – 1 Thess. 4:1-3 – Paul says that he instructed them and they were not living out his instructions. His encouragement here is that learn even greater obedience. The process of discipleship never ends. It is a continual process of growth and great obedience.

Has Learned to Love Others – 1 Thess. 4:9-10 – Paul says they really don’t need to hear a lesson on loving others. They were doing it well and that their love didn’t only spread to their own church, but to others in the region. Again, he only encourages them to do more and more of it.

Conclusion: Mutiny or Maturity?

The question remains for us who are God’s children? Will we get beyond our mutiny and work towards a mature relationship with God. This series on discipleship has shown us the major areas of the Christian’s life that need to be in balance in order for us to live in obedience to Christ. If we choose to only focus on 1 or 2 areas we are neglecting the relationship as a “whole” we are not going to mature in Christ.