

Study # 13

Cruciformity Defines Christian Maturity

It is important to note that the Greek adjective often translated “perfect”—*τελειος* (*teleios* #5046) — does not mean “without flaw or sin”, but means “mature” or “complete”. A related verb *τελειωω* (*teleioo* #5048) means to “make complete” or “bring to maturity”. Consider in each of the scriptures below that **being mature means being mature in being cruciform:**

- We are commanded to be mature: “**Be perfect [mature]** . . . as your heavenly Father is **perfect [mature]**.” (Matt 5:48)
- Maturity of God’s love in us is a result of obeying God’s commands—especially “Love one another”: But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly **made complete [brought to maturity]** in him.” (1 John 2:5)
- Love is brought to maturity by living in love / in God and God living in us: “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is **made complete [brought to maturity]** among us . . .” (1 John 4:16, 17)
- Jesus prays that we become mature by His living in us: “I in them and you in me. May they be **brought to complete [mature]** unity.” (John 17:23)
- The main purpose of all ministry is bringing us to maturity: “. . . he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all . . . **become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11-13)
- Late in his ministry, Paul confesses he had not become fully mature: “Not that I have already obtained all this [being conformed to His death], or have already been **made perfect [brought to maturity]**, . . .” (Phil. 3:12a)
- Paul was passionate about becoming more mature: “but I **press on to take hold** of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” (Phil 3:12b)
- Paul interprets “maturity” as “becoming like him in his death”: “I want to know Christ . . . **becoming like him in his death** . . .” (Phil3:10) (See Phil 3:12a above)

The following statements declare some of the aspects of Jesus' cruciformity, in which He showed the ultimate maturity:

- Jesus was totally unselfish.
- Jesus poured forth perfect sacrificial love.
- Jesus loved all His tormentors, prayed for their forgiveness.
- Jesus did not defend Himself from ridicule, physical torture.
- Jesus showed ultimate courage to defeat all the powers of evil.
- Jesus was thoughtful and caring to His mother during His horrible agony.
- Jesus took no offense.
- Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father as a servant to the point of death.
- Jesus totally ignored man's rejection and sought only to please the Father.
- Jesus did not depend on looking successful, important, or attractive in the eyes of men.

Consider now the wonderful truth that a purpose of Jesus' death was to make it possible for us to manifest the same maturity that He did: "because **by one sacrifice he has made perfect [mature]** (*τελειωω*) forever those who are being made holy." (Heb. 10:14) When He declared "It is finished" (John 19:30), He had become fully mature and had finished all the work to bring us to the same maturity that He had just been demonstrating: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once **made perfect [brought to maturity]** (*τελειωω*), he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." (Heb. 5:8, 9)

When Christ came to live in us, He came with all the qualities that make up His maturity in His cruciformity. However, for us to grow towards His maturity in all our attitudes, actions, and reactions, we are to "press on" in being conformed to His death. (Phil. 3:10, 12).