

## **Mature Faith**

Psalm 71

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Through my discussions with Pastor Eddie, I was made aware that many of my preconceived notions of what discipleship looks like do not actually come from the Bible. So I decided to look into it and give a 3 part series on biblical discipleship. Today I'll talk about what Christian maturity looks like, then later I'll talk about what biblical discipleship should look like and then about the importance of paying attention to our own spiritual lives in addition to those of others.

We will see through Psalm 71 that mature faith trusts and proclaims God's faithfulness. The psalm tells us that mature faith trusts God's faithfulness in 5 ways. First, we must realize that God's faithfulness does not mean that we will get whatever we want or that we won't suffer. In His faithfulness, sometimes He allows us to suffer (v. 20). And though God does sometimes discipline His people through suffering, to turn us towards Him, this is not always the reason He allows us to suffer. Don't accept the popular notion of karma. We know very well from Job that suffering is often not God's punishment or discipline. In His wisdom He allows us to suffer sometimes, and we may not know why. But we should trust that He is still faithful, that He knows what He's doing, and that He works all things for our good, even if things don't turn out the way we would like.

Second, mature faith realizes that God cares about our situation. In v. 6 the psalmist says that even in his mother's womb God cared for him. Though God does sometimes train us through trials, His motivation is not just to make us stronger. And His love for us does not depend on how strong we are or how much we grow. Even when we were in the womb, when we were at our weakest, God cared about us, not because of who we were but because of who He is. We also see that the psalmist continues to trust in God even to the end of his life, when he's writing this psalm. So his dependence on God is just as strong if not stronger than it was when he was born. As people mature in the worldly sense, they become more strong and independent. However, in our spiritual lives we become more dependent on God, recognizing more fully our own weakness, as we mature spiritually. We rely more and more on God's unconditional love and grace.

Third, mature faith trusts that God ultimately keeps us safe. In vv. 1-7 the psalmist mentions several times that God is a rock, a fortress, or a shield. He is our protection and our salvation. He is our high ground and our defense. Those who trust in Him are not put to shame (v. 1 and 1 Peter 2:6). This means if we trust in God, we won't be proven wrong. He will not fail us, because it's not just about us but about His reputation. He wants the world to know that He is trustworthy. However, God keeps us safe on His terms, not ours. His protection doesn't mean that we won't suffer. In 2 Timothy 4:18, Paul knows he's going to die yet trusts in God to rescue him and bring him home. We can rely on God to save us because even if we end up dying, we know that God has already saved us from death, so that it is merely a transition into an eternity with Jesus.

Fourth, we should believe that God vindicates His people (vv. 10-13). The psalmist asks God to fight for him. Now we often don't have enemies that mock us saying that God has abandoned us. But we can apply this to nonbelievers, who may think our faith is misplaced. When my college friend became a believer, her nonbelieving family thought her faith was foolish. But God brought her comfort in knowing that this was His fight, not just hers. She didn't have to have all the answers and arguments. It's not all on us to convert nonbelievers. God fights for us because He wants to bring them in.

Finally, mature faith believes that God is still worthy of our worship, and by worship I mean the acknowledgement that God is trustworthy. We worship not just with our mouths but by placing our trust in Him. Now that we know what it means to trust in God's faithfulness, we should examine our lives and see if this is what we are doing.

Next, mature faith proclaims God's faithfulness (vv. 14-16). Though in a practical sense we often put our confidence in our own problem-solving abilities, our confidence ultimately should be in God's faithfulness. We proclaim His works, not our own. And in vv. 17-18 we see that this is not just to unbelievers, but to those within our congregation as well, to the younger generation. When you've gone through trials, you can understand, empathize, encourage, and perhaps even help those who are going through the same thing. We should be encouraging each other and spurring each other on in faith. And this isn't just in our fellowship. Let's encourage those who are younger and older than us. Pay attention to your spiritual growth, look at how God has been faithful to you, and share it with those inside and outside the church.