

There is an old saying, “If you do not use it, you will lose it.” That was the basis for the old game show, “Are you smarter than a fifth grader?” It was not that a fifth grader was smarter than you, but it was that it has been so long since you used some of those facts, that you no longer remember them. What we once spent so much time and effort to master when we were in school, we do not make use of in our day to day lives, so we begin to forget many of those things which we once knew. The only way that we will not lose them is if we are constantly being exposed to them and use them. This happens with everything that we learn — if we do not keep up with it, we will lose all of the things which we have gained. We can all probably look back to a time when we had worked out real hard and we were physically in great shape, but once we quit working out like that, we lost a lot of the strength and endurance which we once had. This also happens in our faith life. If we do not keep up with the things which we have learned in the Bible, or if we do not continue to put them into practice in our lives, we are apt to lose them. That is exactly why Paul is encouraging us in the Word of God before us by saying, LET US LIVE UP TO WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY ATTAINED. 1. Let us know Christ more deeply. 2. Let us imitate Him more fully.

Each one of us has attained a certain level of Christian maturity. For the younger ones, they are still learning the basic truths of Jesus’ love for them, even when they fall into sin. Those in the confirmation class, or who have recently been confirmed, have grown to know more of the basic truths of God’s love and salvation as they apply to their daily lives. As we gain even more spiritual maturity, we place our love and trust in our loving Savior much more each day. Paul recognizes that about each one of us, for we have attained a level of Christian maturity. What he now asks of each one of us is that we live up to that level of Christian maturity.

When an older child imitates an infant by babbling, or by asking for something by just pointing and grunting, we might say to him, “Don’t act like a baby!” We want that child to act his age and the level of maturity which he has attained. Our heavenly Father says the same thing to each one of us. He does not want us to act like babies in the faith — he wants us to live up to what we have already attained.

And the way that we attain a greater level of spiritual maturity is by being in contact with His Word. If we were to stop sending a child to school where he was required to read and study from the textbooks, he would no longer continue to grow in the knowledge which everyone else in his class would gain. That is why it is necessary for him to continue to work through each of the textbooks which are part of that grade level. You and I also have a textbook that will help us to gain a greater level of Christian maturity. And that book is the Bible.

Once we have come to know what Jesus has done for us, our new man within us will have an unceasing desire to know our Savior even more fully than we did before. When you truly are interested in something, you read up on the subject and continue to grow in your knowledge of the subject. Any good newspaper knows this — just look at the sports page. The editors of a newspaper know that the fans of any particular sport are always eager to learn more information about the league in general, and their team in particular. That is why the daily paper fills its pages with information about the local teams — those fans are eager to read and learn more about their team.

The new man within us is also constantly desiring to learn more and new information about its favorite subject, and that is Jesus. And the wonderful thing about reading and studying the Bible more and more is that in this way the Holy Spirit makes our faith grow stronger and our love for our Savior to grow even deeper day by day so that we can live up to the level of maturity which we have attained.

However, there is another force at work within us that is constantly fighting against the new man and his desire to read and study God’s Word — and that is our old, sinful nature. Our old Adam will tell us that we have enough information about Jesus to last us a lifetime. We do not need to dig any more deeply into His Word. After all, you go to church each week, so isn’t that enough continue to grow in faith and

knowledge about your Savior? That may be true, but think of how much more our faith will grow if we feed and nourish it day by day with God's Word. God's Word is something which we can never get too much of. No matter how much we hear it, read it, study it, we will always be growing and learning more and more from it.

I realize it is difficult to find time in busy schedules to sit quietly and read the Bible as we would like to do. There always seems to be something that we have to do that takes us away from reading the Bible. We know that the Word of God is powerful, and that by reading His Word, each one of us will grow in our knowledge of Him and His promises, and our faith will grow from this. We have His Word of promise on that. It is something that each one of us really wants to do, but finds it hard to accomplish.

Each one of us will want to live up to what we have already attained, even as we are coming to learn more and more about our Savior. And that will make us desire to imitate Him more fully. We shall never be perfect as long as we remain here on this earth. We will still have our old, sinful self that struggles against every good and perfect thing which the Spirit encourages us to do. But we will continue to fight against those old, sinful urges, and thus allow the new man to come forth to serve our Lord and Savior in righteousness and true holiness.

As we read and grow in God's Word, we will be instructed also in those things which are pleasing to our heavenly Father, so that we will know just what He does expect of us, and we will see just what sins are still clinging to us. The Holy Spirit promises that through the powerful Word, He will continue to work within us to give us the desire, as well as the strength, to put into practice many of those things which we know are pleasing to our Father in heaven.

If we do not use it, we may lose it. We know that is the case with the things which we learn here on this earth. How many of us are going to get out the owners manual for our car to reset the clock when daylight savings time ends in a couple of weeks? We do not do it often enough to remember from one time to another. We know the same thing will happen to our knowledge of God's Word. Each one of us learned to recite many Bible passages when we were in confirmation class. How many of them can we still recite today? How many of those truths we learned in confirmation class are as clear to us today as they were on the day we were confirmed? Instead of losing ground after confirmation, confirmation was supposed to be the beginning of the time when we would continue to grow in the knowledge of God's Word for the rest of our lives. For most of us, we have probably hit a plateau where our faith and knowledge is no longer growing day by day as it is supposed to. I pray that each one of us will continue to seriously dig deeply into God's Word so that the Holy Spirit works through it to strengthen our faith and love for our Savior. And as He does that, He will also enable us to put that faith into practice in our daily lives. Let us live up to what we have already attained, and then grow from there.