

The Marks of the Mature Christian (Part Three)

Examining Paul's Pastoral Prayer in Colossians 1:9-14

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Colossians 1:9-14 "For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Review of Part One and Two

Distinguishing Mark #1 A Full Life...that is filled with the life-changing knowledge and wisdom to follow God's perfect will for our lives.

Distinguishing Mark #2. An Exemplary Life...that walks and talks so much like Jesus that others want to imitate us.

Distinguishing Mark #3. A Pleasing Life...that delights God by doing anything He calls us to do when He calls us to do it.

Distinguishing Mark #4. A Fruitful Life...that never stops working and serving the King of Kings.

Now in Part Three

Distinguishing Mark #5 A Growing Life...that increases daily in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:9-10 "...we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

- When we are filled with the knowledge of His will, we will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.
- When we walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, we will please Him in all respects.
- When we please Him in all respects, we will bear fruit in every good work.
- When we bear fruit in every good work, we will be "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10)

going vs. growing

Heb. 5:11-14 "Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

Question #1. Are you really growing in your walk with God today?

Question #2. Are you really being stretched in your faith today?

Question #3. Is your spiritual influence really spreading beyond your expectation?

A stagnant Christian is a contradiction in terms. You are either GOING backwards or you are GROWING forward

Reminder #1. Growing in the Lord is commanded in Scripture.

Ephesians 4:14-16 "...we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Reminder #2. Growing in the Lord was modeled by Paul.

Philippians 3:12-14 "Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

How do we keep growing to maturity? How do we "...grow in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord..." (2 Peter 3:18)
"Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." (1 Peter 2:2)

The Three Levels of Spiritual Maturity

1 John 2:12-14 "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

Level #1. Children in the Faith

- whose chief characteristic is that they know the (Heavenly) Father

Level #2. Young Men in the Faith

- who have learned the tactics needed to overcome the evil one (i.e. Satan)
- who have become “strong” as a result of the Word of God abiding regularly in them as a familiar friend.

Level #3. Fathers in the Faith

- known by one crowning attribute of “knowing Him (Jesus Christ) who is from the beginning” (cf. 1 John 1:1 ff.)

Distinguishing Mark #6 A Powerful Life...that demonstrates God’s strength and not our own.

Colossians 1:9-11 "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might..."

We will be EMPOWERED with all the POWER according to the POWER of an all POWERFUL God

1. We need more of God’s power to serve Him in every area of our lives.

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service." (1 Tim. 1:12)
"Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power." (Ephesians 6:10)

2. We need more of God’s power to serve Him in the midst of the challenges of life.

“But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the lion’s mouth.” (2 Tim. 4:17)

3. We need more of God’s power to serve Him when we are weak and afraid.

"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity but of power..." (2 Tim. 1:7) — "...from weakness were made strong" (Hebrews 11:34)4.

4. We need more of God’s power to serve Him beyond our expectations and imaginations.

"Now to Him who is able (lit. who has the power) to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we ask or think, according to the power that works within us..." (Eph. 3:20) — "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)
"strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might." (Col. 1:10)

El Shaddai

אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי

Elohim (Meaning: “The Strong One”) + Shaddai (Meaning “The Mighty One”) = El Shaddai “The Strong One Who is Mighty”

God’s power is available to us through the influence of His Holy Spirit

Zech. 4:6 "Not by (human) might, nor by (human) power but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

Phil 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens men."

Acts 1:8 "...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."

Eph. 3:16 "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man."

The problem is not the availability of God’s power but our disconnection that comes from unconfessed sin, abiding doubt and anemic faith.

Concluding Challenge:

Paul’s simple prayer is that we would experience...

A Growing Life...that increases daily in the knowledge of God.

A Powerful Life...that demonstrates God’s strength and not our own.

Question #1. What are the evidences of the power of God in my life?

Question #2. What are those things that I desire to do that are impossible unless God does it?

“The people who know their God will display strength and take action.” (Daniel 11:32)

The three themes of a growing and powerful life: **Knowing God • Displaying Strength • Taking Action**

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Pastor Jim identified the sixth distinguishing mark of a mature Christian as A Powerful Life that demonstrates God's strength and not our own. How did God use Paul's weakness to display His strength? What was Paul's attitude regarding his own weakness?

- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
- 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

2. Power can be an intoxicating temptation. In Acts chapter 8, a sorcerer named Simon tried to purchase the power of God from Peter and John to promote his own fame and fortune. But God never gives us His power for selfish gain. What are some of the Biblical reasons God gives us power?

- Acts 1:8
- Romans 15:13
- 2 Corinthians 10:4-5
- Ephesians 3:16-19
- 2 Timothy 1:7
- 2 Peter 1:3

3. How do these verses help you fathom the enormity of God's power available to us in Christ?

- Ephesians 1:18-21
- Ephesians 3:20-21
- Philippians 4:13

TAKING IT HOME

1. Remember that a Growing Life is one that increases daily in the knowledge of God. This knowledge – *epignosis* – does not refer to head knowledge, but the intimate, life-impacting knowledge of God that most often comes through applying God's Word to our lives. Right now, would you say you're *going through life* or *growing through life*?
2. Daniel 11:32 says, "The people who know their God will display strength and take action." This week's message about living a powerful life should encourage us to dream God-sized dreams so amazing that they are doomed to fail unless God accomplishes them. Is there something you desire to do that would be impossible unless God does it?