



Maturing in Christ? (Colossians 1:24-2:7)

So you claim to be a Christian? If so, how would you respond to this question: "Are you maturing In Christ?" Today we discover that knowing and growing in Jesus is both expected and evidenced.

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* All Scripture is from CSB (Christian Standard Bible) unless otherwise noted.

Catch the Context

Last week: We attempted to memorize and marinate on **Colossians 1:22-23a**.

Colossians 1:22-23a NET ²² but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you **holy, without blemish, and blameless** before him—²³ if indeed **you remain in the faith, established and firm, without shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard**.

For followers of Jesus, His death has given us:

- ✓ **POSITIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS:** God sees us **holy, without blemish, and blameless**; now we are to walk in...
- ✓ **PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS:** Christians are to be **livin' forgiven** as the apostle Peter echoes.

2 Peter 3:14-16a ¹⁴ Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, **make every effort to be found without spot or blemish in his sight, at peace**. ¹⁵ Also, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him. ¹⁶ He speaks about these things in all his letters. There are some matters that are hard to understand.

Some words from Paul which are **hard to understand**...but we will attempt to right now.

Colossians 1:24 ²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body, that is, the church.

What in the world is Paul trying to say?

✗ *Is he trying to say that Jesus' death was not enough for the church to truly be forgiven? If so, then why did he write that Jesus "reconciled all things to himself" by his death on the cross?*

✓ *Paul must mean something different. 2 phrases help us interpret this passage, based on Paul's faith story.*

1) Jesus told Paul, "**I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting**" (Acts 9:5)

- We have no record that Paul ever met Jesus, *so how could Paul have persecuted Jesus?* When Paul persecuted followers of Jesus, he persecuted Jesus Himself.

2) Jesus told Ananias that Paul, "is my chosen instrument to take My Name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. I will show him how much he must suffer for My Name." (Acts 9:16)

❖ "**sufferings for you**" Paul experienced **sufferings** for the Colossian church (and many others) to take the Name of Jesus to the Roman world! Paul was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, & run out of town on multiple occasions (2 Cor 11:24-28) Paul knew that what he and other believers suffered was necessary for the church to grow in number & maturity. Paul taught: "*It is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.*" (Acts 14:22b)

From Persecutor to Servant of the Church

Colossians 1:25-26 ²⁵ I have become its [church's] servant, according to God's commission that was given to me for you, **to make the word of God fully known**, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

This **mystery** Paul writes about "was a truth which lay hidden in the pages of the Old Testament" and not **revealed** until Jesus died & rose from the dead.¹ The apostles of Jesus didn't understand this mystery until AFTER Jesus showed them from the Scriptures (Lk 24:26-27, 45-47).

Paul himself, before his Damascus Road experience, didn't understand **the mystery hidden for ages and generations**. But once it was **revealed**, Paul wanted **to make the word of God - JESUS - fully known** to others. In fact, that was the first thing he did after his own conversion and baptism.

Acts 9:20 Immediately **he began proclaiming Jesus** in the synagogues: "He is the Son of God."

But instead of listening, the Jews tried to kill Paul (Acts 9:21-23), as was the case in almost every town Paul went to. So Paul took his message, not just to the Jews, but to the Gentiles (non-Jews).

Colossians 1:27-29 ²⁷ God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory. ²⁸ **We proclaim him**, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so **that we may present everyone mature in Christ**. ²⁹ I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.

Christ comes to live **in you**, in the soul not just of Jewish people, but of *EVERY* believer, through His Holy Spirit (John 14:23; Rom. 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Eph 3:15-16; Gal. 2:20;).

Paul's desire is **to proclaim Him** (Jesus), and to see people come to know and GROW to be **mature in Christ**.

- **Labor** Greek term points to hard work, with difficulties & trouble²
- **Striving** Greek term referring to competing in an athletic event with great intensity and effort.³
 - ✓ This is the Greek term (*agōnizomenos*) from which we get our English word "agonize".

Paul expects these churches to mature in Christ. Although this wasn't written TO US, it was written FOR US, the expectation for every person who claims Christ.

BIG QUESTION: Are you Maturing In Christ?

Colossians 2:1-2 ¹ For I want you to know how greatly I am struggling for you, for those in Laodicea [city right down the road - mentioned in Rev. 3], and for all who have not seen me in person. ² I want their hearts to be **encouraged and joined together in love**, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and **have the knowledge of God's mystery—Christ**.

Significant Fact This is a Jewish Pharisee suffering to help Gentile people KNOW Jesus and GROW in Him. Don't let a racial or age difference deter you from investing in others. If it weren't for faithful Jews like Paul, Gentiles like us would have never heard the gospel of Jesus!

? **Who are you [laboring and striving] helping KNOW Jesus and GROW in Jesus? Who are you encouraging and showing what it means for Christians to be joined together in love?**

YOUR NOTES

¹ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 24

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 514.

³ *Ibid.*, 662.

Colossians 2:3-7 ³ In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I am saying this so that no one will deceive you with arguments that sound reasonable. ⁵ For I may be absent in body, but I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see how well ordered you are and the strength of your faith in Christ. ⁶ So then, **just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him,** ⁷ being rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude.

Christ Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the Messiah - Lord over all. He can't be your savior and not be your lord. Paul uses 2 word pictures to describe what it means to **live in Him**.

✓ **ROOTED in Him** Paul is referring to a plant or tree that is **rooted deep in Jesus** as the sustainer of life.

✓ Followers of Jesus are to be **built up in Him** - Jesus is the foundation that we build our lives on.

Knowing & growing in Jesus is expected & evidenced by the Christian.

FEET2FAITH

1) **KNOW Who Jesus is & what He says = open the Scriptures.** The Scriptures are our starting point to know who Jesus is and what He says. Are you getting in the Scriptures?

✓ **Memorize Col. 2:6-7**

2) **We must seek to GROW in Him daily in knowledge, obedience, & prayer.** Are you growing in those areas? Are you obedient to walk in purity? How's your prayer life - do you thank God & pray for others throughout the day?

3) **We must GO show Jesus to others = love, serve share.** Who are you purposely looking to share with? When's the last time you told them WHY they matter, WHY you're serving, and WHAT Jesus wants from them?

This is the gospel that the Colossians **were taught**. *The one who KNOWS Jesus GROWS in Jesus* - the one who lives in Jesus, rooted and built up in Him, should be a person who is **overflowing with gratitude**, forgiven & free, purified & purposeful. Do you KNOW Him & desire to GROW in Him? **ARE YOU MATURING IN CHRIST?**

heretoseveyou

Have questions and need some help?...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: Steve & Debbie Bass (673-7952), Freddy & Joyce Howard (973-0047), Jere & Darlene Burnette (673-1888), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (673-1387), Jim & Derita Pinkard (229-834-4307), & Fain & Linda Poppell (464-1282).

discussionquestions

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. Share what most challenged or surprised you from today's teaching.
2. **Read Colossians 1:22-23a & 2 Peter 3:14.** Explain the difference between *positional righteousness* & *practical righteousness*. Why does the Christian need both?
3. How does Paul's past (persecuting Christians) compare to Paul when he was wiring to the Colossians? How did God use his sufferings to further the Gospel message? Even though we don't like suffering, share about how another Christian's suffering you know, furthered the Gospel message.
4. **Read Colossians 1:25-27.** Have you ever considered that Paul was a Pharisee and a Jew, who was suffering to take the message of Jesus to Gentiles (non-Jews)? Why should we (Gentiles) be grateful for this? Based on this, what should deter a Christian from trying to share Jesus with a non-Christian or disciple a young believer who is a different race or different age?
5. **Work on memorizing Colossians 2:6-7 together.** Spend time chewing on what that passage really means. What would you say to the person who claims to KNOW Jesus but has no desire to GROW in Him?
6. How do the word pictures of being "rooted in Him" and "built up in him" help you to see the significance of what it means to "live in Him [Jesus]" from Col. 2:6.
7. How can you answer today's BIG QUESTION: **"Are you maturing in Christ?"** What are some evidences of that?
8. Look back to today's **FEET2FAITH** challenges. What are some areas you need to grow in? Brainstorm some practical ways for you all to KNOW, GROW, & SHOW Jesus.
9. Share other prayer needs and lift one another up right now.