

The Making of a Quality Saint

NMOPPC teaching notes for the fourth "Class of Church Person" involved in this study.

"The bigger I grow in God, the smaller I become." (Allen Bond)

Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

A servant of God that is strong is defined by two personality features: the quality of their moral character and the measure of spiritual authority they emulate.

Holiness Precedes Power

Holiness is sin's worst nightmare...holiness is founded on God and focused directly on God. God's presence is so overpowering that sin becomes intimidated by it.

Why does God have a right to expect holiness out of His people? If you belong to God, you should act like, delight in, seek after, want and have a desire like God.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; Colossians 1:26-28

One of the strongest elements in God's expectation is that God has an overwhelming confidence in Himself. When God is in you, you have the predispositions to be just like Him. The Holy Ghost grants to the saint the ability to walk among men; but be not like men. God gives His children the ability to be around sin and yet not drown in it.

Example; a fish in salt water is able to take in the water but not the salt.

Leviticus 20:26; Romans 8:9-11; Galatians 2:20; Titus 2:14

What man would be happy if people commented that his son looks just like the neighbor next door! How do we think God would feel if His children looked like the devil, acted like the devil and spoke like the devil?

John 3:34; John 8:38-47; Romans 8:9-17; 2 Peter 1:3, 4, Heb. 12:10; Galatians 3:26

Regeneration means a new birth. It is more than a reformation of the old nature; the regenerated man receives a new, holy nature that has power over the old, sinful nature. The new birth involves two elements: (1) destroying the power of the old nature (II Corinthians 5:17) and (2) imparting a new nature, which is actually the nature of God Himself (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; II Peter 1:4).

The new nature brings a change of desires and attitudes (Ephesians 4:23-32) and power to live a new life (Acts 1:8; Romans 8:4). The new birth does not eliminate the sinful nature; the Christian has two natures, the flesh (sinful or carnal nature) and the Spirit.

Adoption is the act of choosing and placing (positional) a child. Regeneration indicates that we are children of God by reason of a new, spiritual birth; adoption signifies that we become God's adult sons and heirs by His conscious choice. Adoption, then, refers to our position as sons of God with all the rights associated with that status.

In Romans 8:14-17, Paul used the adoption analogy in a somewhat different way. At our conversion we were adopted in God's family, becoming younger brothers and sisters of the man Christ. As adopted children we obtain all the legal rights and privileges of a natural born son. Christ is the only begotten (biological son (Jn 8:42)) of the Father and the only One originally entitled to be an heir, but by adoption we, too, become heirs of the Father and, therefore, co-heirs with Christ.

Isiah 66:1 God made the temple, the human body, for Himself and desires to come home (rest). He has made a place for Himself in every human being.

Psalm 16:11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Matthew 18:20; 28:20; John 14:16-18.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Psalm 24 -To ascend toward God is to walk into a furnace of truth where falsehood is removed from our souls. To abide in a holy place a person must dwell in honesty, even when a lie might seem to save us.

Psalm 139:23-24 - The old nature is like a well-worn shoe into which we relax; we can be in the flesh instantly without even realizing it. The enemies that defeat us are hidden and latent within us. *The Holy Spirit must expose our foes before we can conquer them.*

Jeremiah 17:9; Psalm 19:12-13 – There may be errors inside of us that are actually ruling us without our awareness. How many of our actions are pure vanity and the desire to be accepted by others? Are we aware of the fears and apprehensions that unconsciously influence many of our decisions? *Concerning ourselves we think so highly of what we know so little!* Even though outwardly we know our camera pose, do we know how we appear when we are laughing or crying, eating or sleeping, talking or when we are angry? The fact is that most of us are ignorant of how we appear outwardly to others; much less do we know ourselves inwardly before God. Our fallen thinking processes automatically justify our actions and rationalize our thoughts. Without the Holy Ghost we are nearly defenseless against our own innate tendencies toward self-deception.

A maturing saint is marked by inward purity

A Christian must treasure the Word (Psalm 119:9-11). We treasure the Word as we remain fully vulnerable while it judges (Heb 4:12). The word exposes our motives. It is the lamp of the spirit which illuminates the darkness of our hearts with light. Do not sympathetically make excuses for your darkness. Confess it, hate it, and renounce it. For as long as darkness remains in darkness, it rules you. When your darkness is brought out into the light, it becomes light (Ephesians 5:8). The Word liberates us from the strongholds of hidden sin. It wounds but also heals; penetrating the core of our being. The Word with the Holy Ghost is the motive power that brings our transformation into the image of Christ. Holiness comes to those whose treasure is the Word.

A true disciple trembles when God speaks (Isaiah 66:2).

The Word should engraft into your soul, becoming part of your nature (James 1:21).

Matthew 7:1-5; 1 John 3:1-4

Jesus did not condemn sinners-he condemned hypocrites. A hypocrite is a person who excuses his own sin while condemning the sins of another. *A hypocrite is one who refuses to admit he is at times two-faced-pretending a righteousness that he fails to live.* A hypocrite does not perceive his own flaws within himself. A hypocrite does not deal with the corruption in his own heart. We cannot remain hypocrites and at the same time find holiness. Therefore the first step we truly take toward sanctification is to admit we are not as holy as we would like to appear.

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Topic Introduction: Some foundational data of what makes a Christian "strong in the Lord"

Colossians 1:26-28; 2:1-10

(26) even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: (27) to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (28) whom we preach,, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present everyman perfect in Christ Jesus:

F.F. Bruce [...the Greek word translated "mystery" refers to "something hitherto concealed but now revealed, and especially (in biblical usage) some aspect of the divine purpose."]

The mystery is "Christ in you" namely, the promise and reception of the indwelling Christ. While the phrase may refer to Christ's presence in the church corporately, meaning "Christ in your midst," it seems that the more prominent thought is Christ's presence individually, that is, "Christ within each of you." Believers do not receive Christ because they are part of the corporate church, but they are part of the corporate church because Christ dwells in them individually.

Christ dwells in us as the Holy Spirit. (See Romans 8:9-11; II Corinthians 3:17). The way we receive Christ into our lives is by repenting and receiving the Holy Spirit as recorded into the Book of Acts. Christ promised to be present with His disciples throughout this age; the way He fulfills this promise is not by physical presence but by His Spirit. (See Matthew 18:20; 28:20; John 14:16-18.)

Christ's indwelling presence is our "hope of glory," or pledge of final glory. If we do not have the Spirit of Christ we do not belong to Him, but if we have His abiding presence we have spiritual life, righteousness, the promise of resurrection, and an inheritance as God's children (Romans 8:9-17). The Holy Spirit is "the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14, NKJV).

"Perfect" is translated from *teleios*, which means "mature, fully grown, complete, whole." The Christian life is a continual growth process, a process of perfecting holiness (Matthew 5:48; II Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 3:12-16). No one is absolutely perfect, but each of us should seek to be relatively perfect, or mature. We can live a holy life by separating from sin and dedicating ourselves to God. We can be perfect, or mature, by maintaining our faith in Christ, living a repented life according to God's Word, and seeking to grow progressively more Christ-like by the power of the indwelling Spirit (Ephesians 4:13). God expects continual growth in grace and knowledge and increasing production of spiritual fruit (John 15:1-8; II Peter 3:18).

Colossians 2:1-10

Verse 2 the believer is (1) to be encouraged ("comforted"), (2) to attain unity in love (see also Colossians 3:14), and (3) to attain the full riches of complete understanding. These are the primary goals of discipleship. Significantly, it is impossible to divorce spiritual understanding from brotherly love.

Verse 4 makes explicit the warning against the false teaching in Colossae. To "beguile" here means to deceive. "Enticing words" means persuasive speech; plausible (but false) arguments; fine-sounding,

attractive arguments. By contrast, Paul made a point not to use “enticing words of man’s wisdom” but to preach the gospel “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (I Corinthians 2:4).

Verse 5. Two characteristics of quality saints.

1. Their “order”—orderliness, soldierly discipline. The word has military connotations.
2. The “steadfastness”—firmness, stability—of their faith in Christ. The Greek preposition for “in” is eis, meaning that Christ is the object of faith.

Verse 6 speaks of the Christian life as a journey on a path. The only way to victory and eternal salvation is for us to continue walking (living) in Jesus Christ in the same way that we began in Him, namely, by faith and through the power of His Spirit. “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish: having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? . . . Walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 3:2-3; 5:16; Romans 8:1-16).

Verse 7

1. Compares the Christian to a plant. We are to be “rooted” in Jesus Christ. The Greek uses the perfect participle, which indicates that our rooting is to be permanent, abiding, once for all.
2. Compares the Christian to a building. We are to be “built up” in Jesus Christ. The Greek uses the present participle, which indicates that our building up is to be continual, progressive, day to day. We are to be “stablished”—established, confirmed, strengthened—in the faith. The Greek again uses the present participle, showing that this establishing is a continual process. This, process is to occur “as ye have been taught”—not in accordance with the human thinking described in verse 8 but in accordance with gospel truths and instruction from God’s Word. A key to spiritual victory is to maintain an attitude of thankfulness under all circumstances. (See Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17; I Thessalonians 5:18.)

Verse 8. After verses 6-7 describe the way to live victoriously as a Christian, verse 8 issues a warning that the danger is not merely conjectural or hypothetical but real and likely. The danger is that someone would “spoil you.” The verb means to take captive, carry off as spoil, rob, cheat.

- “Philosophy.” The word simply means love of wisdom, but this verse couples it with “vain deceit,” giving it a negative connotation. Hence it means false human wisdom as opposed to true spiritual wisdom.
- “Vain deceit,” or empty deception. The Greek uses one article for “philosophy and vain deceit,” indicating that both descriptions refer to the same thing. Thus the False Philosophy versus True Faith NIV combines them into one description: “hollow and deceptive philosophy.”
- “The tradition of men.” There is an implied contrast here to the commandments of God. (See Mark 7:6-9; Colossians 2:22.)
- “The rudiments of the world.” The same Greek phrase appears in verse 20 and in Galatians 4:3. The Greek word translated “rudiments” is stoicheia, which means “fundamental principles, basic principles, first lessons, rudimentary instruction, elements.” The same word is translated

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"elements" in Galatians 4:9. According to the context of both Galatians and Colossians this seems to mean legalistic traditions or teachings based on worldly, fleshly thinking.

Thus false philosophy is based on human traditions and principles of the world. Instead of following these faulty sources of teaching, we need to learn Christ. Unfortunately, the terms and concepts that characterize traditional trinitarianism were borrowed from secular philosophy of the ancient world, and they lead to a distortion of the true doctrine of God.

Verse 9 presents the doctrine of Jesus Christ in contrast to false teachings. It is a magnificent description of the Incarnation, for it emphasizes both the true deity and true humanity of Jesus Christ.

- "Godhead" (*theotes*): the Deity. This Greek word is "the abstract noun for God . . . and includes not only the divine attributes but also the divine nature." The word refers to the state of being God, to the sum total of God's nature. The identity of Jesus as God would be established if verse 9 simply said, "In Him dwells the Godhead," for by definition "Godhead" is the fullness of absolute deity.
- "Fulness" (*pleroma*): plenitude, totality. The same word appears in Colossians 1:19. The Gnostics used it to designate the supreme God in contrast to lesser emanations from Him. This verse contradicts the Gnostic view that Christ was an emanation from the *pleroma*; instead, it says that the *pleroma* is in Christ. To be as clear as possible, the verse says "the fulness" of the Godhead dwells in Jesus, although the Godhead can never be less than complete and absolute.
- "All." To underscore the deity of Christ even further, the verse says "all" the fullness, although by definition anything less than all would not be fullness. Lightfoot explained that "all the fulness" means "the totality of the divine powers and attributes." ("St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon").
Thus verse 9 uses three words to declare the absolute deity of Jesus in the strongest of terms, although one would have been sufficient to express the point.
- "Bodily" (*somatikos*): "bodily-wise, corporeally, assuming a bodily form, becoming incarnate, with a bodily manifestation." This word contradicts the Gnostic view that Christ was a spirit being only. In Christ, God has joined Himself to humanity and has come into this world as a human being.

"In him" is emphatic. It is in Christ, and nowhere else, that one is to find "the fulness of the Godhead." In him the fullness "dwelleth," that is, has its permanent abode. This "fulness" means the unbounded powers and attributes of God. The word "Godhead" denotes the essence or content of divine being, that indeed which constitutes God. Here in most absolute terms Paul states not merely the divinity but the deity of Christ. The word deity, and its corresponding word in the Greek, denotes the "being God." Christ is not only Godlike; he is God.

All the roles, titles, and attributes of God are invested in Jesus. Whatever God is, Jesus is. He is the incarnate God, Father, Word, Spirit, Lord, and Jehovah. (See John 1:1, 14; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9-11,

16-18; 20:28; II Corinthians 3:17.) In sum, Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the one God, and **this truth is foundational to our faith.**

Jesus Christ is different from Christians in that He is actually God incarnate, God revealed in flesh, the human personification of the one God. The Deity resides in Him because He was literally conceived by the Spirit of God; God joined Himself to humanity in the womb of Mary. Jesus embodies the Spirit of God without measure (John 3:34-35). Ordinary humans can live without the Spirit of God in them, but it was not so with Jesus. He was God by nature, by right, by identity; He was not merely deified by an anointing or indwelling. Unlike the case of a Spirit-filled person, the humanity of Jesus was inextricably joined with all the fullness of God's Spirit.

Jesus possessed the unlimited power, authority, and character of God as His very nature, while we participate in those qualities only by having Christ in us. We have the fullness of God in our lives only as we let Jesus Christ live in us. We can let God's nature shine through us and control us, but we can also quench it and let our own human nature dominate.

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