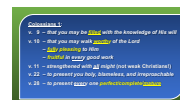


Being “saved” and going to Heaven is not the only end goal of becoming a believer. Becoming a Christian means exchanging your old life for a brand-new life, an *eternal* life that starts now, and for which God has a plan & purpose to be realized in the world today, in our present circumstances.

In **Colossians 1**, Paul expresses this truth in these terms:

- v. 9 – that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will
- v. 10 – that you may walk worthy of the Lord
 - fully pleasing to Him
 - fruitful in every good work
- v. 11 – strengthened with all might (not weak Christians!)
- v. 22 – to present you holy, blameless, and irreproachable
- v. 28 – to present every one perfect/complete/mature



Maturity is thought of as a product of age + experience, which accumulate over time. The Bible presents *spiritual* maturity as a matter of *character*, demonstrated by a particular *mindset*. What is a mindset? A setting of the mind. We have settings on our TVs, phones, computers, appliances, car radios, alarm clocks, etc. We choose options/preferences for speed, temp, volume, brightness, channel, so-forth. Scripture says we are to have proper dispositions, attitudes, priorities. What adjustments do we need to be in tune with, aligned with Heaven?



Steve talked about one mindset a couple of weeks ago: *since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm/equip yourself with the same purpose/mindset/expectation*. That’s a major adjustment from the way the world thinks, and much of the Church, too!



Paul gives an extended outline of this mindset in **Philippians 3**: repudiation of your worldly identity, cross-centered, denial of self, obsessive focus on Christ, always pressing forward in faith, aiming for Heaven! Furthermore, any believer can exhibit a mature mindset at any time, from day one – age is not the determining factor – and every believer *ought* to have a mature mindset every day!



In **Colossians 3:1-2**, Paul admonishes us to “...seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” In **vv. 5-25** he lays out specific, detailed settings for the Christian life, such as “put off anger” and “put on kindness” – not only general settings for all circumstances, but settings for marriage, the home, and workplace!

When Paul prays for the church to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, walk worthy of the Lord, be fully pleasing to Him and fruitful in every good work, these are the measurable outcomes he is looking for, the answers to his prayer. How do we measure up to these measurables?



Galatians 5:16-26 gives us another clear contrast between earthly and heavenly, flesh and spirit, temporal and eternal. When all of our Bible knowledge and doctrines and experiences are added up – the real question is, have we been loving? Kind? Patient? Peaceful? Longsuffering? Gentle? Self-controlled? Faithful (is your word reliable, can we count on you, are you here regularly and on time)?

Unfortunately, much church history is a sad smorgasbord of works of the flesh: biting & devouring one another, idolatry (giving anything more preeminence than the Lord), hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders (hate in your heart = murder) and the like! Paul’s warning falls on deaf ears, **THOSE WHO PRACTICE SUCH THINGS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM!**

Elementary Christianity is not the goal. Elementary faith is not sufficient. You don’t get into the Kingdom by mere profession of facts or a resume of works. “*Lord, Lord... Depart from Me, I never knew you!*” It should be our goal & obsession to pursue Christ with a mature mindset – pursue His will, His ways, His character, His Spirit – to be all out for Him, all the way!



Hebrews 5:12-6:2 challenges us to grow out of babyhood into maturity. Consider the things listed as “milk,” not solid food, intended for babes & unskilled believers, first/foundational things deemed “elementary.”



- Repentance from dead works – all our teachings on salvation, holiness, grace versus law!
- Faith toward God – for salvation, healing, miracles, answers to prayer!
- Baptisms – water baptism, death of the old man, HS & fire baptism.
- Laying on of hands – authority, ministries, gifts, healing, impartation.
- Resurrection of the dead – wow! Somebody gets raised from the dead, that's really something!
- Eternal judgment – the future, eschatology, Heaven and hell.

How much of our doctrine, theology, and preaching is entirely wrapped up in elementary things! How much of the Church has never heard anything beyond foundational, elementary things for spiritual babes? We *ought* to know these things, we *ought* to be teachers of these things, and we *ought* to be moving on to deeper, higher, more mature truths... Such as?

Maturity is not reflected in our understanding and preaching of these foundational things. Paul said there's much more to the Christian life, and he was always praying for the churches to manifest maturity in their behavior, attitudes, speech, and relationships. Which really means, to walk in love, walk in the Spirit, manifest the fruit of the Spirit.



To walk *worthy* of the Lord: The Greek *axios* means to have weight or substance equal to another thing of like value. What the Christian says or does should have the same weight or value as if the Lord Himself is saying or doing it. Now there's a measure to measure up to! What would the Lord have me say or do to adequately and accurately represent His desires, character, & goals? To manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

To be fully pleasing to Him... *areskeia* is about *desiring* and *striving* to please by accommodating one's self to the opinions, desires, and interests of the Lord. Are we motivated to please Him in all things, all ways, so that our lives have the same weight, character, and value as His life? Have I accommodated myself to all of His opinions, desires, and interests, so that He is truly preeminent in all things? Or am I holding parts of me in reserve?