

# Growth in Spiritual Consciousness and Conduct

by Doc Greenway

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of growth in spiritual consciousness and conduct, and highlights the need for a balanced walk in spiritual conduct.*

**Duration:** 23:38

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Colossians 1:9-12

**Topics:** "Spiritual"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story of a young girl from Czechoslovakia who struggled with language barriers and other difficulties when she moved to America. She observed a Christian girl named Margaret who lived her life in a way that reflected Christ's teachings. This led the young girl to attend a service and eventually find Christ as her Savior. The preacher then focuses on a prayer for the Colossians, highlighting four things that are prayed for: growth in spiritual consciousness, growth in spiritual conduct, growth in spiritual work, and growth in wisdom as the people of God. The objective of all spiritual knowledge is to have consistent conduct and character.

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## Transcript

I want to speak this morning from the first chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, commencing our reading at verse nine. I'd like to read from verse nine again and a few verses following that. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that he might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that he might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life.

I think that there is nothing more self-revealing than a man at prayer. When a man speaks to other people, he may be able to hide his true feelings and even his true self. But when a man truly prays, there is nothing that he can hold back from God.

And I think, too, that when you study the prayers of the Bible, and particularly the prayers of the Apostle Paul, you get an insight into his own evaluation of the action and reaction of the Spirit of God and of the

people of God in the life to which we have been called. He has a great concern for the Lord's people. This is evident.

And his concern is chiefly with growth and development in spiritual life. It's an amazing thing. I've often thought about it, that although Paul, for his day and age, was a great traveler, and although he undertook many journeys, you don't ever find him describing the scenery or discussing the political situation or talking about anything in a materialistic sense at all.

But rather, he is concerned with the spiritual life and growth in conduct and character of the people to whom he ministered. And I'm quite certain that this man had a passionate longing for the people of his day, especially the members of the body of Christ, that they might have an understanding of the deeper things of God. I don't think you could ever accuse Paul of dealing in non-essentials.

He was never taken up with marginal things. For my part, I feel that he always got to the heart of the matter. And his concern was with the deepest parts of our life as the people of God.

That is what you have in this prayer for the Colossians. The prayer itself goes from verse 9 right down to verse 14. But of course, we have no time to develop the whole prayer this morning.

We're just to deal with the first two verses. But I'll give you the outline as I see it. He prays for four things.

First, he prays for growth in their spiritual consciousness. That is verse 9. Then for growth in their spiritual conduct as believers. That is in verse 10.

In verses 11 and 12, it is growth in spiritual constancy that concerns him. And then in the fourth place, in verses 13 and 14, he prays concerning their growth in spiritual confidence. Spiritual consciousness, spiritual conduct, spiritual constancy, and spiritual confidence--all these are important in our life as the saints of God.

Let us look, first of all, at this growth in spiritual consciousness which he mentions here. You find the basis of his prayer when he says, For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you. For this cause.

What cause? What had Paul heard about these Christians at Colossae? Well, Epaphras, their minister, had been to see Paul, and had brought a report of the church at Colossae. He had mentioned, first of all, their unquestioning faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Their faith in Christ as Savior.

That is mentioned in verse 4 of this chapter. Not only had he spoken to Paul about their unquestioning faith in Christ, but of their unstinted love to all the saints. For it goes on to say, And of the love which he had to all the saints of God.

Evidently they had no favorites. Their love was the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. A love which makes no distinction.

A love which embraces the unwanted. A love which finds a place for the outcasts of society, if you like. A love which makes no distinction in the church.

Which is not guilty of schism, division, of creeds. But a love which is to all the saints. And this is the love of God.

Then he had also heard about their unwavering hope. A hope reserved in heaven. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, he says.

So the trilogy of graces was theirs. Faith, and hope, and love. They possessed all three.

And surely with this in their possession, one would say, What need is there to pray for people like this? Surely God has mightily blessed them. They've got the heart of the thing. They've come to the very center of it all.

They've surely arrived. But he says, We do not cease to pray for you. They still needed a spiritual development.

A spiritual consciousness. And there will never be a time when we can say, and really mean it, that we know it all. Always there is a need for growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Always there is a need for a developing consciousness of the things of God. And this to me is the amazing thing about serving God and living for Jesus Christ, that we have been given a book which you can't exhaust. A book which belongs on a superhuman level.

And therefore it is impossible ever to reach the limit of new discovery where this book is concerned. It's old, but it's as modern as tomorrow. As relevant as it could be to our day and situation.

And so there can never be any end of understanding and comprehending and grasping the significance of what the Bible really teaches. And this is why we are concerned to let the Bible speak for itself. And it speaks with a voice of authority.

That then was the basis of the prayer. The things he had heard concerning them. Their faith, their love, and their hope.

But then think of the burden of his prayer. He prays in this way, to desire that he might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. For as we read from Living Letters, we have kept on praying and asking God to help you understand what he wants you to do, and to make you wise about spiritual things.

That he might be filled, filled to the full is the meaning of this word. Trammed full. No possibility of anything left out, but absolutely filled to the full.

Where can this take place and how does it take place? It takes place in our God-consciousness, in the spirit that has been quickened since we came to Christ. And it is here, pervading this capacity for God, which we all possess, that growth and development is to take place. When the apostle prays for the Ephesians, that they may be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, it is strengthened with might in the inmost being, with power penetrating to the inmost recesses, to the God-conscious part of our being.

Many people think that knowing God is a matter of intellect, but it is a matter of spirit. We can know about God by our rational reasoning faculties, but we can only know God when our spirit is quickened toward him. And this is where growth and development in the things of God take place.

That he might be filled to the full with the knowledge of God's will. What sort of knowledge? Here the word is a very particular word and a very important word, epinosum. It means full knowledge gained through

experience.

This is the knowledge that they desired, the knowledge gained by experience concerning the will and the purpose of God. And he says, in all wisdom and over all comprehension, knowing how to apply the knowledge of God's will to any particular situation. George Mueller of Bristol said, it always took him much longer to find out the will of God when he prayed about a matter than to get the answer to the prayer once he knew what God's will was.

He knew how to apply God's will to the situation. And he goes on, and spiritual understanding. Here the emphasis is on the word spiritual because knowledge, wisdom, and understanding are all related to the will of God.

Spiritual understanding means the power to discriminate and so to choose a right. So you have knowledge, which is the apprehending faculty. You have wisdom, which is the applying faculty.

And you have understanding, which is the assessing faculty. The power by means of which we assess the things of God. And the will of God for us is a very important thing, to serve God in his will, to be doing what God wants you to do, to be conscious of what his desire is, and to live in that consciousness.

This growth in spiritual consciousness is open to every one of God's people, without exception, to anyone and everyone who will respond to the moving of the Holy Spirit in their lives. For Jesus promised that he should guide us into all truth. He leads us on by paths we did not know.

Upward he leads us, though our steps be slow, though oft we faint and falter on the way through storm, though storms of darkness oft obscure the day. Yet when the clouds are gone, we know he leads us on. For this is his function.

And if we are listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit, when we kneel in prayer, he will show us the way and lead us in the will of God. And then he prays for growth in spiritual conduct. Verse 10, that he might walk worthy of the Lord, and to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

The objective in all spiritual knowledge is consistent conduct and character. And so he talks first about their walk, then he talks about their work. Finally he talks about their wisdom as the people of God.

That he might walk worthy of the Lord, and to all pleasing. Wherever you find the word walk in the Bible, it refers to conduct. And the word worthy or worthily, axios, means to weigh one thing against another, to balance up.

And according to Romans chapter 6 and verse 4, this balanced walking means walking in newness of life. Because if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. All things are passed away.

Behold, all things are become new. So this balanced walk is a walking in newness of life. Again we are told it is a walking by faith and not by sight.

2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 7. Paul told the Ephesians, it is walking in love, as Christ also hath loved us. It is walking circumspectly, not as foolish people. Redeeming the time, buying time out from alien hands and using that time in the purposes of God.

It is walking in the light as he is in the light, says John the Apostle. To sum it all up, it means to walk in the spirit as Paul wrote to the Galatians. And then, if we do this, we shall not bring to perfection in action the strong passions on fire of our carnal nature.

A young girl from Czechoslovakia who went to America found great difficulties in understanding the language and many other problems. She worked at a mill. She watched the other girls, the American girls, and she tried to do what they did and tried to follow them.

But there was one girl in particular that she thought was outstanding. She did not know it at the time, but this girl was a Christian. And on one occasion, this Christian girl invited her to attend a service with her.

She went several nights, and finally she found Christ as her Savior. And in her testimony, she said, If you want to know how it is that I am a Christian, it is because I looked at Margaret, and she lived each day at our work as the preacher said, Christ must have lived amongst men. And I felt I wanted to be like her, and that is why I am a Christian.

And what a wonderful thing it is to know that even though our tongues may be silent at times because of circumstances, and though we cannot speak as we should like to, because we know there are difficulties, yet our walk can speak for God. Our conduct can tell forth his work and his life. And then he prays concerning their being fruitful in every good work.

He talks about their work as well as their walk. Now what is this good work that he mentions here? A work to be good in the biblical sense must have a right motive, love to God, love to men. Then it must have a right incentive, faith.

It must have a right objective, and that is to glorify God. And so this being fruitful in every good work is an entering into our fulfilled life as Christian men and women. And you know many things enter into this condition.

There is, for instance, the acceptance of the responsibility to bear fruit that Jesus spoke about in John's gospel when he said, He hath not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that he should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. There again is the substance of the soil for fruit bearing. In Matthew 13, But he that receiveth seed into good ground, is he that heareth the word, understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

The substance of the soil, it's broken up, it's prepared, it's ready to receive. And there is the importance of the seed itself. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.

He that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And there is the continuance of the relationship which we bear to Jesus Christ. I am the vine, he said.

He are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me he can do nothing.

If you abide in me, and I abide in you, the upsurge of the life, like the upsurge of the sun, helps us to bring forth fruit to his praise and glory. And thereby our Father in heaven is magnified and glorified. And then this prayer for growth in spiritual conduct concerns their wisdom.

It reads, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Not here now of the will of God, but in the knowledge of God himself. And again this word knowledge is the same, knowledge gained by experience.

To know the will of God is good, but to know God himself is best of all. For it is written, the people that will know their God shall be strong and to exploit. And I think that it is founded on our determination to seek after God.

The wise man said in the Old Testament, you know the wise man Solomon in the book of Proverbs, yea, if thou cryest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God. It's linked with our determination to seek after God. And it's linked with our salvation too.

For Jesus said, this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God. And Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. And so we see the importance of this spiritual wisdom, this comprehension of God gained by experience.

And the need we have to remember the great commandment, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy strength. And loving God like this, we get to know God progressively. When we know him, we are strong.

And we can serve him acceptably. This then is the first part of this prayer for the Colossians. A prayer concerning growth in spiritual consciousness, and growth in spiritual conduct.

And may these words find an application in our lives to make us better Christians. May the Lord bless his word. Let us pray.

We praise thee and thank thee, O God our Father, that thou hast made such ample provision for our growth and development as those who profess to love thy name. We are members of the body of Christ, of which Christ is the living head. And by joints and bands we have nourishment, ministered one to another, through these points of contact one with another, and with thee through Jesus Christ.

Let thy life flow in, and then let it flow out from us, in those works that are good in thy sight, in a service which is acceptable to thee. We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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