

Fully Pleasing God

Ten things to pray for in your growth in grace

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. Col 1:9-12

Introduction

For decades these verses have headed my various websites and have undergirded my whole ministry from the beginning. They show Paul's heartfelt prayer for his disciples that they grow in grace.

Now there are all sorts of handbooks and instructions for disciples on the market promising all sorts of exceptional things if one does this or that. Many are based upon appeals to a lust for power: 'do this to boost your faith and you can command anything you want'. Paul never spoke like that.

Instead, Paul emphasises the knowledge of God's will combined with wisdom and spiritual understanding so that you walk right; thus: knowledge, obedience and righteousness are his key issues. God's power is available for disciples but for Paul this power is given us to suffer with thanksgiving, not to work miracles.

So we can see that Paul's methodology for growth in grace is very different from many of the things being peddled today in churches that have become all but apostate.

My purpose here is to expound Paul's list for the good of all.

The preparation for walking

The saint has to learn to sit before he can walk. Sitting at the feet of God and being prepared to walk correctly is hugely important in the Christian life.

How can a hiker know where to walk if he does not first sit down and study a map and prepare his venture? Recently we have seen people die on mountains and wild places in England because they did not first sit down and study a map.

Not only that but every journey needs the preparation of the right supplies. This is not just food and water but the right kind of shoes and clothing, the right materials for the journey (such as ropes if mountain climbing), the ability to make a fire, cutting tools etc.

The spiritual life is no different; it requires careful preparation. Zeal without knowledge is a dangerous thing. Far too many believers have got themselves into serious problems because they dashed into something without considering the costs first.

In a building or decorating job preparation is absolutely paramount. Without the necessary preparation (often the hardest part of the task) the job is ruined. Preparation is key.

The Christian life is no different. Preparation is incredibly important. The point is to please God; there is no other greater purpose of our lives. If we fail to please God in our life then our whole life is wasted. We cannot please God in our walk if we first do not know how to please him. Knowledge is vital.

To ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will

Knowing God

To please God we first need to be filled with the knowledge of his will. Knowing God's will requires knowing God; you cannot know God's will without knowing God because God's will is the expression of who he is.

God's will stems from his attributes. Everything that God requires of man is an expression of an attribute. For example, God requires that his children should be holy because he is holy.

As He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'. 1 Pt 1:15-16¹

So, part of knowing God's will is the study of theology, knowing God. A huge part of growth in the Christian life is discovering more about the character of God. In fact the central foundation of growing in grace ought to be developing in the knowledge of God.

On the other side of glory believers will see what a huge privilege we have today in getting to know God by faith and truth without seeing him.

God's law

God's will is the thoughts of God regarding how man should behave; this is represented in Scripture as the law of God. The law is God's explanation of what man must do to please God and walk right.

Now there is great confusion amongst Christians about this subject. Some conservatives teach that all that is required is to follow the Mosaic Law, especially the moral law of the Ten Commandments (despite the fact that the Sabbath law has been rescinded). There are multiple reasons why this is wrong, not least that the Mosaic Law was a temporary institution for Israel alone (Gal 3:19; Deut 4:7-8, 14). We must witness to Christ not to a mere ten-point statute; the Ten Commandments are not enough.

Then there are other Christians who teach that all forms of law have been cancelled and that the believer is not under any law whatsoever. This is also false since we are commanded to, 'fulfil the law of Christ' (Gal 6:2).

All men are under the moral law of God and always have been. This law was taught to Adam and has been in operation from the creation of mankind. You can see repeated examples of man being under God's law (repeated in the statutes of the Mosaic Law) long

¹ The quotation is from Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:7. This is reinforced by Jesus as, 'Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Matt 5:48).

before Sinai. You can also see that Jesus came to fulfil the law and not to get rid of it.² The New Covenant believer obeys the law, and is empowered to fulfil it, by walking in the Spirit. Law is not abrogated, but is internalised and made spiritual.

Fulfilling God's law today is obeying Christ, walking in the Spirit, putting on the new man, walking in the light, running well etc. The cancellation of the Mosaic Law (Heb 8:13) did not stop the requirement of men to obey God's moral law; but this can only be obeyed by men of the Spirit, not the flesh.³

If we want to know what God's will is then we need to know what God's moral law is. The New Testament entails a complete exposition of God's law for believers who fulfil it as they walk in the Spirit. It is required of us that we know and understand this law.

Christians are citizens of a heavenly city, of a new world. This world has laws and these laws are the expressions of God's law as expounded by the apostles. If all believers studied these laws and understood how we obey them, there would be no apostasy in the churches.

For example:

- If you love Me, keep My commandments. (Jn 14:15)
- You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. (Jn 15:14)
- These things I command you, that you love one another. (Jn 15:17)
- Flee sexual immorality. (1 Cor 6:18)
- I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. (1 Cor 7:10)
- Keeping the commandments of God is what matters. (1 Cor 7:19)
- Flee from idolatry. (1 Cor 10:14)
- If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. (1 Cor 14:37)
- Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ... You yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another. (Col 3:5, 8-9)
- Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (Col 3:12-14)
- You know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. (1 Thess 4:2)
- Flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. (1 Tim 6:11-12)
- Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Tim 2:22)
- Submit to God. Resist the devil. (Jm 4:7)
- Love one another fervently with a pure heart. (1 Pt 1:22)
- Be tender-hearted, be courteous. (1 Pt 3:8)
- Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. (1 Pt 4:9)

² Matt 5:17 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil'.

³ For details and exposition of this see my book, 'The Believer's Relationship to the Law'.

- He who says, 'I know Him', and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. (1 Jn 23:4-5)

We could continue in this vein for page after page. Who says there are no laws for the believer today?

The knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding

This second item is something that is rare indeed.

Knowledge and wisdom are very different. Knowledge is knowing about something intellectually but wisdom is understanding how to apply knowledge in the real world to get results. Academics can know all the mechanics of the components of a motor car engine but have no ability to fix it.

There is a modern adage that sums this up delightfully: knowledge is knowing that tomatoes are a fruit; wisdom is knowing not to put them in a fruit salad.

Christians can have knowledge; such as, they can quote multiple texts of the Bible and give chapter and verse, but have no understanding whatsoever about how to live to glorify Christ.

Knowledge and spiritual understanding are different. Many people have a knowledge and respect for Jesus Christ and yet are not regenerated and have no relationship with God at all. Knowledge isn't union. Spiritual understanding is not about facts and figures, or even academic knowledge of doctrines; it is about knowing, trusting and obeying God.

So to grow in grace we need all three; we need knowledge, wisdom and spiritual understanding. Knowledge is understanding Biblical doctrine. Wisdom is knowing how to apply doctrine and put it in practice in the world. Spiritual understanding is knowing how to obey God and bear fruit through the Holy Spirit.

Walking

That you may walk worthy of the Lord

The whole point of the Christian testimony on earth is that we walk worthy. It is not about power, miracles, huge faith, mighty exploits, continuing prosperity and all the rest; it is about being worthy.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. Eph 4:1

Walk in love. Eph 5:2

Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Phil 1:27

That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Col 1:10

That you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 1 Thess 2:12

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God. 1 Thess 4:1

As He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct. 1 Pt 1:15

Complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. Heb 13:21

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1 Jn 2:6

The essence of the Christian life is simple and child-like. The greatest saints, in their memoirs, often talk about realising the child-like quality of their testimony as they became older and wiser. In this simplicity, we learn to just walk worthy in all that we do.

Fully pleasing Him

Walking worthy is how we please God: ‘how you ought to walk and to please God’; ‘work to do His will ... pleasing in His sight’.

God is our Father and as a father he is well pleased with us when we do his will. Pleasing God is not complicated; it is just about being obedient to our Father.

As children we can:

- Fully obey our Father and thus fully please him.
- Partially obey our Father and thus he grieves about us for some things and disciplines us to learn better.
- Never obey our Father and thus prove that we are not his children at all.

The church today has many examples of the last two but only a very few examples of the first.⁴

Being fruitful in every good work

Everything that we do can bear fruit if we do it in faith and obedience to God’s will. We do not have to do mighty exploits and perform in front of thousands of people, we just need to do what we are told in our own sphere of influence.

This is a massively releasing truth. Everybody can fully please God in whatever lifestyle they have, if they are walking in truth, walking in God’s will. This means that a wife who is a mother and homemaker can fully please God in the way that she brings up her children and runs the home. A man can fully please God by working hard, as unto the Lord, in his job in order to provide for his family. Children can fully please God by obeying their parents and striving to be good.

God is pleased when we obey him and walk according to his will. It pleases God when we simply work hard in our calling and get through the day walking righteously. We don’t have to do something impressive; we simply have to walk worthy.

Far too much teaching on conduct in the churches today is afflicted by worldly, earthly ideas; and at the end of the day such ideas are demonic. There is a lot of talk about success, attaining, achieving, realising goals, and boosting our self-image in one camp. In another camp there is much talk about constant healing, working miracles, achieving financial prosperity, getting anything you want by claiming it and so forth. All such teaching is centred far too low; it is set on earthly objectives and not spiritual ones.

⁴ I am not advocating perfectionism. In reality even the best Christians still have an old nature present and still have a tendency to sin. However, such people mostly please God. They have a high degree of practical holiness.

The Christian's goal is Christ and Christ alone. A worthy walk is being like Christ. We do not set our minds on worldly objectives and what seems good to the world around us; we focus upon Christ and following him simply.

Thus the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians is a reflection of all that Christ is. As we bear the fruit of the Spirit we are manifesting Christ. It doesn't matter if we are washing up or mending the car, all that we do to the glory of Christ pleases God. It is the character of our obedience that pleases God, not our exploits. It is walking worthy.

Increasing in the knowledge of God

Theology is the great privilege of believers and every one is called to it.

Theology is simply the study of God and all believers need to advance in their knowledge of God on a daily basis. The purpose of Bible reading, Bible study, meditation and prayer are not to merely advance in just knowledge, but to increase in the knowledge of God.

One measure of how much we are growing in grace is to test how much we are increasing in the knowledge of God. Growing in holiness is pointless if we are not advancing in our understanding of God's character and attributes.⁵ If you do not know God, how can you be a testimony to him?

A man's wife could be fully described by a casual acquaintance in declaring her height, shape, colour, hairstyle, clothing, conversation, choices, hobbies, friends, and so on. Yet this stranger does not KNOW her at all. Only her husband and perhaps her closest family really know her. In the same way believers that press on to know the Lord know the character of God. Others merely know facts about God in an academic fashion – this is not knowing God at all.

The importance of knowing God is shown in the way that we walk. If we do not know God well we will not walk worthy. The purpose of a son is to please his father; in the same way a believer needs to know God in order to walk right and fully please him.

The great problem in the churches today, and the reason why so many are fully apostate and filled with churchgoers that sin outwardly, is that the members do not know God. In many cases they do not know God at all but are merely church attendees. Churches are filled with professing Christians. On top of that there are many true believers in the churches that, despite years of being a Christian, are infants in faith and knowledge and do not know how to walk.

When we see church leaders model bad behaviour and even sin, then it is not surprising that their followers do not walk in grace. Even leaders that do not openly commit sins hold up to their people goals and objectives that are not remotely Biblical – because they do not understand what God wants. They do not know what God wants because they do not know God's attributes.

For example, all Arminians do this because their basic theology denies many attributes of God, particularly his sovereignty over man, salvation and history. Open theists go so far as to deny that God knows the future. Such people (and this includes many famous modern

⁵ There is a certain type of 'holy' behaviour that seems pious on the surface but in reality is a charade. There are many apostate church leaders who give the appearance of being holy but clearly have no knowledge of the Lord. In church history there have been many supposedly holy leaders who went on to commit appalling sin and fall away. Holiness is not what we seem to others but what we are in our hearts to God.

leaders) clearly do not even have basic knowledge of God, let alone subtle aspects of his character.

Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. Hos 6:3

Continuing to walk in the face of opposition

Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power

Our walking is only as good as our warfare. There is no point in having a good character that immediately collapses under pressure. You are only as strong as you are at your weakest and most disadvantaged, just as Israel in the wilderness could only travel as fast as the weakest person.

Some people are full of pomp and circumstance. They manifest supposedly perfect Christian lives until the devil attacks them, when they capitulate immediately. This sort of testimony is of little use.

There are others, perhaps very quiet people in the background, who manifest a great testimony in the face of continual pain, suffering, slander, betrayal, sickness, grief and abuse. Though they are not famous and fill no auditoria, they have a superb testimony.

This is why we need ‘all might according to his glorious power’. It is right to teach about having the power of God; we all need divine strength. However, it is wrong to teach that God gives us power specifically in order to accomplish great things, such as miracles and healings. We are categorically informed here that we need divine power just to live worthy. We cannot live worthy without strength from God.

Power was given liberally to the apostles and their delegates in the early church to work miracles in order to prove that the Gospel was divinely authenticated (Heb 2:3-4). That specific sort of testimony was short-lived and once the Gospel had been established and the apostles died out, that sort of testimony was greatly reduced. I will not say that it ceased; miracles and healings still occur under God’s sovereignty (I have been healed, but not in some big meeting); there is good evidence of occasional miracles, healings and prophecy throughout history, but they are rare and according to God’s will when absolutely necessary. Tongues certainly ceased before 70 AD and modern tongues are nothing like apostolic tongues.

Thus, for example, Paul does not talk about tongues and interpretation later than 1 Corinthians (56-57 AD). Neither do we see Paul healing people as part of his Gospel proclamation later in his missionary journeys (with the exception of the incidents in Malta, which had not been widely evangelised at that time). John’s letters written later still (sometime just before 95 AD) have no talk about miracles, healings or tongues. For James healing has already become a corporate matter (Jm 5:14-15; probably before 50 AD). This is why miracles and healings gradually diminish as you progress through the book of Acts.

As the modern church focused upon supposed miracles and Charismatic gifts from about 1960 onwards, so the church gradually fell away from walking worthy. All that happened in the Charismatic Movement is that the church became like the world and pagan ideas proliferated.

We must centre upon what God tells us. We need divine power in order to simply live worthy day by day. We don’t need to seek for power to raise the dead; we simply need

strength from God to live right. We need such divine assistance because we are incapable of doing it ourselves.

The devil will do all that he can to stop us being a testimony to God and this is why the power of God is so vital to us. We cannot even pray effectively without distractions; thus even our prayers need divine assistance.

The greatest enemy opposition will be directed at those who seek to walk worthy; thus the power of God is an absolute necessity to walk in grace.

For all patience and longsuffering

For Paul, divine power is to be expected for day-to-day living the Christian life. He specifically applies the need for power to having a good testimony, to be able to walk worthy. We need divine strength to be able to cope with what life throws at us. God's power is necessary in order to be patient and long-suffering. It is impossible to live the Christian life in one's own strength; resurrection life is necessary to manifest a divine testimony.

Enemy action of one sort or another will try to stop us from walking worthy. Therefore, heavenly strength is necessary to persevere and maintain a good testimony.

Throughout history we see example after example of ordinary people who fully pleased God and exhibited a powerful testimony, despite great opposition. Such people did not consider themselves but went to death rather than yield to temptation. These folk knew 'all might, according to His glorious power for all patience and longsuffering'. They did not preach to thousands; they did not become financially rich by faith; they did not heal hundreds of people or raise the dead; they gave their lives in service to the Lord and were martyred simply for preaching the Gospel or refusing blasphemy.

We may not be called to give our lives but we need divine power just as much.

With joy

The greatness of the Christian testimony is not just that we persevere, not just that we manifest patience and longsuffering, but that we do it with joy even in the face of suffering and persecution.

Christian joy is a fruit of the Spirit; it is not a reaction to pleasant circumstances. Our joy is not like the joy in the world, based upon fleeting pleasures, but is based in Christ. We can have joy in any circumstance when we centre upon Christ rather than ourselves.

It is of great importance that we rid ourselves of earthly ideas about power, which has more to do with fiction than religion. Divine power is given to the believer in order to be able to walk worthy and continue in the face of opposition with patience, longsuffering and joy. We do not need divine power to work a miracle today; we need God's strength in order to continue persevering in the face of opposition.

In the face of the way the world is today, and considering certain Scriptures that become ever more relevant, we need divine power to walk properly more than ever before. It is far harder to walk righteous today than it was when I was first converted in the early 70s.

Thanksgiving

Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Giving thanks to the Father

Over and over again we are told in the NT to be full of thanksgiving; indeed, this should be a natural reaction to the grace that God has given us in Jesus Christ.

Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph 5:20

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Phil 4:6

Abounding in ... thanksgiving. Col 2:7

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving. Col 4:2

We give thanks to God always. 1 Thess 1:2

We are bound to give thanks to God always. 2 Thess 2:13

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made. 1 Tim 2:1

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. Heb 13:15

Thanksgiving is a trait of a true believer. Often in today's excitable churches we see a great deal of froth and bubble in corporate praise times but we see precious little thanksgiving in the day to day experience of those same people outside of the church meeting. Such corporate worship is often more about emotional self-indulgence than thanksgiving to God.

The person that knows God the most will give thanks the most. The more you understand the glory of God and his provision of the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, the more you are bowled over and filled with thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is at the heart of a true worshipper. Genuine worship is filled with thanksgiving. Praise to God is a declarative form of thanksgiving, 'the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name'.

Thus the believer will give thanks in his prayers. He will give thanks for his food before meals. He will give thanks throughout the day as he glories in God, such as when he sees a blue sky, a majestic mountain or the wonders of natural history. Husbands will thank God for their wife and fathers for their children. In the west we can constantly thank God for a roof over our head, food and clothing. In troubled nations Christians can thank God that he preserves us victoriously, rewards us for our suffering in his name, and that our earthly troubles are short-lived in comparison to eternity. Whatever our situation, there are always multiple reasons for thanking God, to say nothing of our daily thanks for salvation in Christ.

Who has qualified us

One reason for giving thanks is to understand that God has qualified us in Christ.

The word 'qualified' means to make sufficient, to make capable, to render fit, to equip one with adequate power to perform duties, to make someone adequate or competent for something.

God has enabled us to be able to sustain the glory of our inheritance in Christ. This is the new man made in the image of Christ.

No man can make himself capable; there is no meritorious salvation. Nothing a man can do can change his nature from being a rebel to being a saint that inherits. Thus all those Arminians who claim that their freewill initiated their salvation are wrong; only God qualifies us to inherit.

This ought to be a great relief for the Lord's people. There are so many badly taught churchgoers that feel a heavy sense of failure and inability. Many even struggle to accept that God is their Father who loves them. This is the work of the accuser of the brethren who seeks to stop them from being effective by burdening them with guilt and doubt.

God's word is that you have already been qualified by God himself. You do not have to do anything to be qualified; you are qualified.

All those self-help books and those 12-step programmes that teach you to increase your faith so that you can be a great success in life are pointless. Only God qualifies you for any good work (Eph 2:10); you are not the product of your self-effort but of God's grace. God is constantly preparing us for good works to please him.

This qualifying began in eternity and continues throughout our lives.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? Rom 8:29-31

- God lovingly knows us in eternity past and decrees that we should be elect.
- God then predestines us to be conformed to Christ from eternity.
- In time, we are then called by God with a special, efficient calling.
- After being called, God justifies us in Christ.
- Those who are justified are then glorified.

If God does all these things to qualify us, then if God is for us, who can be effective against us?

If you are Christ's then you are qualified. Do not let anyone take that confidence away.

To be partakers of the inheritance

Christ is the inheritor of all God's promises, blessings and prophecies. All things are in him.

The OT is full of promises to the righteous man that would do all God's will, but no man ever sustained his obedience to God perfectly. Indeed, it is impossible for those with a fallen nature to perfectly obey God (this destroys all forms of mysticism by the way). Thus the promises were never fulfilled in any man.

The greatness of Christ is that he is not just the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, he is also a real man born of Mary. In his human nature on earth, Christ

fulfilled all the commandments and perfectly obeyed his Father's will in all things. Thus Christ became the only person qualified to obtain the promised blessings.

So Christ became the fulfilment of all that God promised to man over many centuries. The blessing was poured out upon Christ. Therefore all the promises in the OT to the righteous man are now present in Christ, the perfect man.

But the wonder of salvation is that the inheritance of Christ is shared with his people because they are in Him. We can obtain to the promises of God by virtue of being in Christ. This is why we can have the indwelling Holy Spirit who was poured out upon Christ. Since the Head was anointed, so is the body.

So, we can read of all the promises of the divine inheritance throughout Scripture and we can claim those promises because they are given to us in Christ.

Christians are partakers of the inheritance. We can partake with Christ because we are qualified in Christ.

Of the saints in the light

These are two titles of the Christian: the believer is a saint and he is in the light.

'Saint' means 'a holy one'. It is someone that God considers holy. All true believers in the church are saints, 'To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints', (1 Cor 1:2).

The application by certain churches of the word to historical figures alone is meaningless. People are not saints because the Roman Church says so but because God says so; and he calls every single one of his chosen people a saint.

We cannot explain the fulness of the doctrine of sanctification here, but every believer is a saint because he has been sanctified (1 Cor 6:11). The past tense of sanctification occurred when God regenerated, justified, sanctified and adopted us. The present tense is called progressive sanctification; it is our gradual growth in grace as we change slowly; it is being sanctified (Heb 2:11, 10:14). The future tense of sanctification is the instant when Christ changes our mortal body at his return so that we are fully sanctified and made meet for heaven (1 Cor 1:8; Eph 5:27; Phil 1:6; Col 1:22; 1 Thess 5:23).

'Saint' is a true title for those elect who have been sanctified, are being sanctified and will be fully sanctified.

Christians are also in the light and no longer in darkness.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Col 1:13

For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. Eph 5:8

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 1 Thess 5:4-5

The inheritance is for the saints in the light. Those in the light are those the Father has qualified – his saints.

If you are in the light you are not in the darkness. This seems eminently obvious and yet many Charismatic teachers claim that Christians are often in darkness and need to be released by their ministry, such as deliverance ministry (a term not found in the Bible).

Believers must flee such people and affirm what God says – that they are in the light. If God is for you who can be against you? If Christ has delivered you from darkness then you are not in the darkness. If God has given you his indwelling Spirit, the Holy Spirit will not allow his home to be shared with a demon.

The emphasis of many Charismatic preachers about saints being in bondage is really about bringing them into bondage to their ministry. I have seen churchgoers utterly dependent upon some man claiming to have power; with some going repeatedly for exorcism after exorcism.

Avoid such charlatans. You are qualified in Christ; you are an inheritor in Christ; you are a saint of God; you are in the light and no longer in darkness.

Nobody who is constantly troubled about needing deliverance or some special ministry from a leader is ever going to walk worthy and will not please God. Why? Because such behaviour denies what God has already done for them in Christ. God wants his people to trust what he has already done for them in Christ – that is what walking by faith is all about. It is also why the enemy plagues people with such doubts. Stand against those doubts and trust God's word.

Growth is from Christ the Head

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him ... holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God. Col 2:9-10, 19

We grow because we are in Christ. As we hold fast to him we increase in knowledge, understanding and grace.

All development comes from Christ. In order to grow properly a disciple must learn from his Head. This is why Christ must be pre-eminent in the church (Col 1:18). He is the centre and pinnacle of all that the church is. Anything that distracts the Lord's people away from Christ is wicked and dangerous.

Thus individual disciples must continually look to Christ in order to grow and the local church as a whole must centre upon Christ.

Growth comes from Christ and the growth is more of Christ. He is the beginning and the end of growth.

Sadly, today we see church and Christians focus upon many things other than Christ: a doctrine, the Holy Spirit, miracles, healing, seeking gifts, seeking power, seeking money, the church as a social centre etc.

The saints

We are also nourished and knit together by fellowship with the saints (joints and ligaments). How does fellowship help us to grow? It does so by revealing more of Christ to us.

As we properly fellowship (there is very little true *koinonia* in churches today) the mutual ministry of all the saints working together manifests more and more of the testimony of Christ. Fellowship is each member expressing what he/she is in Christ. As they do this you learn more about Christ the Head of the member.

Sadly, today we have a situation where people think that the only member they learn from is the minister or pastor. All the other members sit quietly in pews doing nothing and thus we never learn the varied expressions of grace that Christ has given them. True church fellowship is where every member has an expression of Christ that is freely shared as the Holy Spirit empowers and directs.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*... But one and the same Spirit works all these things [gifts], distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. ... For in fact the body is not one member but many. ... But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they *were* all one member, where *would* the body *be*? But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. ... those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honourable, on these we bestow greater honour. 1 Cor 12:4-23

Conclusion

Pleasing God is not a complex matter; it does not require a PhD in theology. Pleasing God is all about walking worthy and this simply means obeying God day by day.

We cannot complain that we cannot walk worthy because God promises to give us all the power and strength, according to his glorious might, in order to walk worthy. The very weakest, poor and challenged believer in the church can still have a good testimony and walk worthy because God gives us all that we need to do so.

We have no excuse; let us walk worthy and fully please God.

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification. 1 Thess 3:12-4:3

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