

A Vision of Maturity

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Philippians 1:3:8-15 ESV 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Developing a Vision for Spiritual Maturity

- ✓ Some people would say, “Going deep in God”, Others would say “running hard after God”.
- ✓ We want our lives to be marked by a whole hearted, radical pursuit of Jesus. Becoming more like him everyday, until the day that we meet him when we die.
- ✓ Rom 8:29 ESV For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
- ✓ Conformed - fashioned like unto - The idea that God wants to fashion us, mold us, shape us, into the image of his Son.
- ✓ Col 3:9-11 ESV 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
 - We have before us the image of our creator, Jesus, and we take hold of it and put on the new self.
 - Paul links putting off the old self and putting on the new self to actions.
- ✓ There are things we don't do and things we do: Our old self had practices, and because we have put it off, we don't do those things anymore. Sexual immorality, impurity, passion evil desires, covetousness which is idolatry. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying,
- ✓ There are things we do: Prayerful meditation and reading of the word, giving, fasting, having compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other
- ✓ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Mature

- ✓ Let's ponder this word mature for a minute - What kind of maturity does Paul mean?
τέλειος- root teleios
 - In the KJV - this verse reads like this - Philippians 3:15 KJV Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

- It is clear that Paul intended for some in church, if not all, to be mature, or in some sense, perfect, as the King James translates. I think we need to not underestimate what this means, and not overestimate what this means.
- When we underestimate, we can get sloppy in our pursuit of Jesus.
- When we overestimate what this means we have expectations that we can't meet nor anyone around us.
- What was the Holy Spirit's intention in putting this idea in the word.

✓ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48

Perfection/Maturity of the Father

- ✓ Wow. That is a high standard. So, in some sense, we are to match the perfection or the maturity of Father himself. But what does this mean? Let's look at a few examples where Paul uses pictures to see if we can discern what perfection or maturity means.
- ✓ 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 ESV 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.
- ✓ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away
 - The contrast is between in part or partial and perfect. Now we have partial knowledge and we prophesy in a partial way, but then everything will be complete. All the parts will come together. Then Paul moves to another picture that I don't think is an accident.
- ✓ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child (immature thinking). When I became a man, I gave up childish ways (mature thinking).
 - So, when Paul was thinking of partial and perfect, what came up in his mind was the contrast between a child and a man.
 - A Child - a child is like a man in many ways, except his arms are short. His legs are short. His muscles haven't fully developed. His knowledge and reasoning are lacking, but then when he becomes a man, he is perfect or mature.
- ✓ Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. - 1 Corinthians 14:20
 - Again, the contrast is between the way children think and the way adults think. Paul's understanding of this Greek word for perfect or mature, is the difference between the incompleteness, immaturity, and lack of fullness of a child's limbs, and mind and heart and reason.
- ✓ 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. - Hebrews 5:13-14
 - Again, the contrast is between child and mature.
 - The mature, who are skilled in the word of righteousness, apply the word of righteousness constantly and train their powers of discernment. They let the word of righteousness tell them what good is and what evil is, and not the culture or society they are living in.
 - Children don't apply the word of righteousness and grow in discerning good from evil, the mature do.
- ✓ Ephesians 5:8-10: 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

- ✓ Discerning what makes God happy. What puts a smile on his face.
- ✓ Ephesians 5:17: Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
- ✓ Understand the will of the Lord.

Summary of Mature

- ✓ Let's go back to Philippians 3:15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.
- ✓ It means we're not children
- ✓ Not in experienced in spiritual exercises, discernment, warfare
- ✓ Positively - Our faculties of discernment have grown up to experience spiritual affections, or to pursue spiritual or heavenly aims.

How we are supposed to think

- ✓ Think this way - This phrase is sometimes translated "feel this way".
- ✓ Philippians 1:6-7: 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.
- ✓ Greek scholars say it is a difficult phrase to understand because it doesn't just denote rational thought, but the feelings and emotions that come with the way you think. It touches our affections.
- ✓ Your mind has a set. It locks itself in on things and we take the word of God and cry out to the Holy Spirit that our mindset can be renewed from earthly and carnal ways of thinking and feeling to spiritual and heavenly ways of thinking and feeling.
- ✓ Ephesians 4:22-23: 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds

What to set our Affections on and how to renew our Minds

- ✓ Philippians 3:8 ESV Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ
- ✓ I re-wrote this: Indeed, I count everything as loss (and) for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and in order that I may gain Christ.
- ✓ So Paul is losing things and gaining things. How does he think about this gaining Christ. I like the way the NIV puts verse 10: I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death Philippians 3:10 NIV

Power of His Resurrection

What does it mean to experience the power of the resurrection?

- ✓ We Encounter the Holy Spirit
 - Romans 8:11: If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.
- ✓ Whatever went on in that tomb on the third day, swells in me.
- ✓ We are not just talking about resuscitation, but we are talking about resurrection. Heavenly minds, heavenly limbs, a sinless body that will never get tired or run down or die. The person that does do that, and the person that will do that in the future for all those who trust in Jesus, dwells in me??!!!!

- ✓ Ephesians 1:19-20: That you would know (or experience) 19 what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places

Power

- ✓ Not just power, but the greatness of his power. The heights of his power. The best of his power.
- ✓ Immeasurable
- ✓ It never runs out.
 - Our power resources run out. The gas tank gets low in the car. The cell phone battery dies. You drill for oil, and eventually the oil well runs dry. Even in nuclear power plants, the rods get spent, but God's power is immeasurable. Always there.
 - You can return to experience the power of the resurrection time and time again. You can drink from this well that never runs dry.
- ✓ Power for our broken bodies, power for our unrenewed minds, power to be experienced in your family, power to be experienced in the ways He is calling us to serve him, power to tell someone about Jesus, power for discipleship.
- ✓ Power of the resurrection
- ✓ It is power that raised brought Jesus out of the tomb with a resurrected body
- ✓ And power that set Jesus at the Father's right hand
- ✓ The power that brought all things in subjection to Jesus
- ✓ I have access to the power that puts every angel under his leadership? I have access to power that subjects Michael to Jesus. The angel that is going to wage war against Satan and his armies and defeat them?
- ✓ Revelation 12:7-9: 7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world-he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.
- ✓ I have access to the power that subjects demons to Jesus? The many demons that we named legion in Luke 8 would have to obey me if I commanded them in the name of Jesus?
 - Luke 8:29-33: 29 For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) 30 Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. 31 And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. 32 Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. 33 Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

Power over Disease and Sickness

- ✓ Mark 6:56: And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.
 - This is what Paul says we are going to experience when Jesus returns
 - Philippians 3:20-21: 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- I never want to grow weary of crying out for power. Jesus, deliver us from a weariness of crying out for power and a lack of faith that you will not act.
- I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, Philippians 3:10

Participation in His Sufferings

- ✓ This is the same idea as Philippians 2:5-8 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- ✓ You can have something that is already yours. Purchased for you. Already given to you as a gift. Which is yours.
- ✓ If you feel discouragement that you could never look like Jesus. “I mean come on! Not really, right” Paul wants you to know that this mindset is yours! Given to you, and sealed by the blood of Jesus.
- ✓ Let Jesus have the reward of his suffering by accepting this gift. Philippians 2:7: But emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Serving Others and Humbling Yourself

- ✓ How do we empty ourselves like Jesus? We actually start doing real practical things to serve those around us.
- ✓ Serving others will began to rid yourself of self.
- ✓ Philippians 2:8: And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
 - How do you humble yourself? You start being obedient.
 - Focusing on obeying Jesus will keep you in a place of great humility.

Power and Suffering work together

- ✓ 2 Corinthians 4:7-11: But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- ✓ 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: 16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
- ✓ We want mature thinking. To think in such a way that leads us to pursuing spiritual maturity. Leaving childish ways of thinking and letting a spiritually mature way of thinking guide us into being confirmed into the Image of Jesus.
- ✓ In this mature thinking, we pursue the power of his resurrection, and we become like Him in His death.
- ✓ Then Paul speaks further to this vision of maturity: Phil. 2:11-12 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

- This is where Paul's life is going. He has his eyes on the thousand year reign of Christ. He has his eyes on the new heavens and new earth. He has his eyes on the new Jerusalem. Eternal glory and perfection. The earth being full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. The 1st Corinthians 15 resurrected body.
- Paul uses this word "not" a couple of times here. (12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own.)

Perfect

Philippians 3:13-14

- ✓ 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect (perfected, the verb form of this word mature), (and what Paul is wanting to attain is the resurrection from the dead) but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Not that I am fully matured or perfected, that is the resurrection, but I set my mind on the resurrection, and pursue that reality now.
- ✓ Jesus made us his own, and has a dream in his heart for our lives, our glorification, that we would be with him where he is, beholding his glory, and he calls us to rejoice in this now, set our eyes on that day, and get as close to him as we can now and be the most obedient we can be, now, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Our assurance that Christ has made us his own is not suppose to produce a coasting life, a life without urgency, as if nothing hangs on our pursuit. Paul goes on: 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
 - Does this describe us as a people? If someone would evaluate your life, would they say you strain, press, reach.
 - This is what marked Paul's life, and this is what I want to mark my life.

One thing I do

- ✓ paraphrased we might say, "I have one great unified reason for living or goal" - undistracted pursuit of the fullness of Christ in the upward calling of God. I devote my life to attain the fullest possible experience of Christ imaginable.
- ✓ Forget what lies behind - There is a role of forgetting and a role of remembering.

The role of remembering

- ✓ Ephesians 2:11-13: 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands- 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
- ✓ This remembering produces thanksgiving and praise. Remembering how miserable it is without Jesus.
- ✓ For those of us in the room who had a gradual awakening to faith in our youth. Didn't really live that wild and never really backslid, we have to receive the biblical revelation of what we were without Christ, and ponder had we not accepted him, where we would be.
- ✓ For those in the room who have real memories of what life was without Jesus, you need to remember what life was without Him, without near and under the blood, and allow biblical revelation to produce thankfulness.

- ✓ For those who received salvation, backslid, and returned, maybe multiple times, you need to receive the biblical revelation of what might have happened had you died in that season, and allow it to produce thanksgiving in your heart.
- ✓ The key is that we need to remember our former lives not with longing in our heart that we can't have that anymore, but with gratefulness for his salvation and the wonderful door that has been open to us to gain Christ and know him in the power of his resurrection and share in his suffering.
- ✓ Luke 7:41-48: 41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."...47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven-for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."
- ✓ Without memory, we don't know if we are forgiven much or forgiven little, therefore we love little, but when we remember, as in Ephesians 2, we love much.
- ✓ Remember the faithfulness of God in our lives.

The role of forgetting

- ✓ We forget the world Luke 9:61-62: 61 Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."
- ✓ Paul had to forget his former manner of life, and in comparison to Christ, he called it excrement.
 - You don't keep excrement in the closet. You don't hide it away, and go find it from time to time and admire it. You throw it away. You get rid of it.
- ✓ Forget failures as believer
 - Peter, John, Thomas, Phillip,
- ✓ Our identity being tied to past experiences. It's a process of letting go. Past relationships, High School flings,
- ✓ We have to forget those things that pull us away from a forward reaching pursuit of Jesus. Living off of the testimony of 5 years ago.
- ✓ Luke 17:32-33: Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.
- ✓ Gen. 19:17 And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away" ...24 Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven...26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.
 - She wasn't looking forward to what God was taking her into. She wasn't reaching forward and pressing on into the deliverance God provided. She was only looking back at what God was taking her away from.
- ✓ Straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- ✓ Straining explained earlier by the phrases "pursuing the power of resurrection while sharing in suffering"
- ✓ The goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus - explained earlier by the phrase "that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."
- ✓ 1 Timothy 6:12: Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

- ✓ 1 Peter 5:10-11: 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- ✓ 2 Peter 1:3: His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence
- ✓ Hebrews 3:1: Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession
- ✓ There is no neutral in the kingdom of God. We are either moving forward or going backwards.
- ✓ It's small choice after small choice. Our friend Julie Meyer, at IHOP used to say it like this. How do you have a have a passionate love and obedience of Jesus for a lifetime, it's decade by decade. How do you faithfully love Jesus for a decade, it's year by year. How do you walk with Jesus for a year, it's month by month. How do we love Jesus faithfully for a month, it's day by day. How do I give Jesus all of my heart today, it's moment by moment and choice by choice.

The parables of the Kingdom in Matthew 13

It is like a seed, like a mustard seed, like a little bit a yeast. Small

- ✓ Seed - As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." - Matthew 13:23
- ✓ Mustard seed - 31 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." - Matthew 13:31-32
- ✓ Leaven or yeast - He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." - Matthew 13:33
- ✓ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Phil. 3:15