

The more mature a Christian is, the more thankful they become. The more immature a Christian is the more discontent they are.

I'd like to spend the next 30-40 minutes proving this to you with the hopes that you will purpose in your heart today to become a grateful person.

One of stated purposes on this church's mission statement is "**to Reveal Christ**"

Well..

### **Few Things Reveal Christ More Compellingly than a Grateful Person**

And if we get a whole bunch of grateful followers of Christ together in one place, you end up with a church that powerfully reveals Christ to others.

So that's what we are going to talk about today. I have two points for my message:

1. Spiritual Maturity is a Process Energized by Christ
2. Spiritual Maturity is a Practice Exemplified by Gratitude

Let's read our text together—**Col 2:6-7** (read)

#### **1. Spiritual Maturity is a Process Energized by Christ (vs 6-7a)**

**Verse 6** begins with the word "therefore" (or in the NIV "so then"). It's saying because of what is true about Christ that's

already been covered in the letter up to now, let's live in light of those facts.

And what exactly has been said about Christ? A LOT.

**He is the image of the invisible God. Col. 1:15**

**All things were created by him and for him. Col. 1:16**

**God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. Col. 1:19**

This is the one you have put your trust in when you believe in Christ.

No ordinary man this one. The whole universe was created BY Him and For Him. Whether you know it or not, you exist for him. This is the astounding reality.

The emphasis in **verse 6** is on the absolute Lordship of Christ— You received him not as one religious choice among many, but you have tethered yourself to the living and true God.

Here is what is even more amazing: Col 1:27 reveals a great mystery:

**God chose to make known ...this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col. 1:27**

This mighty King indwells each true believer in Christ. It's an astounding truth.

**Verse 6** says—live in light of that reality—“so walk in him” or “continue to live in him”.

So how exactly do we do that? **How do we live in light of the fact that the God of the universe has taken up residence in our hearts?**

Don't miss the little phrase "in Him" in **verses 6 & 7**. Do you see it there? Easy to miss but so very important we don't.

Notice this carefully. In **verse 27** it describes your relationship with Christ as "Christ in you". In these verses it describes your relationship with Christ as "in Him".

The closest reality in our lives that pictures this is the sexual relationship between a husband and wife. That "union" is sacred and holy because it pictures the relationship God has with his people:

**"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Eph. 5:31-32**

This is why faithfulness and intimacy in marriage is so important—it points to something much greater.

So when we are told in verse 6 to live in light of the fact that Jesus is Lord, we are not left on our own to try to figure this out by ourselves. **God has joined himself to us in deep personal relationship—to help us live for him.**

In **verse 7**, it further explains how this works. What we notice right away is that Paul is using mixed metaphors. Do you know what I mean? Let me give an example:

“I’ll deal with that road when we cross it” —should be “we’ll cross that bridge when we get there”

“We’ll iron out the remaining bottlenecks” should be “We’ll iron out the wrinkles”

We would expect the apostle Paul to describe Christians as rooted & growing strong, and bearing fruit (which would be a tree metaphor),

Or grounded on a foundation, joined together, until a solid house is built (a construction metaphor).

But Paul combines them in **verse 7**—mixing metaphors—a tree with a building. Why does he do that? I think he’s doing it to teach us something very valuable.

### **ROOTED**

When Paul tells us our growth in Christ depends on being rooted in Christ, he is emphasizing what is **hidden** as roots are, and **what supports the whole** as roots do, and **what human hands have nothing to do with**—because roots grow without human involvement (no pumping or cranking handles).

Christ is the soil in this image and we are the root, it says we are **rooted “in him”**. The soil provides the nourishment—the minerals, the water etc to feed the growth of the tree.

Our growth my friends doesn't primarily depend on us. Yes, we are commanded to "walk in him"(vs 6) so we are responsible for our growth too. **But everything we need comes from Christ.**

The word "rooted" is in a grammatical form that emphasizes we are rooted in Christ & can't be "unrooted" or pulled up. Secure in Jesus forever!

But then he switches the metaphor to a building analogy to teach us something else:

### **BUILT UP**

Building are not build haphazardly—they are built using a Blue Print—a plan. There is a sequence to building things. It's the same in the Spiritual life. Some areas of growth are dependent on previous areas of growth.

For example, if you don't have a meaningful time in the word and prayer each day, its unlikely you will be able to deal with your anger problem, or the lust that ravages your mind.

But there is something else Paul is trying to teach us through the building analogy. Buildings are not like taking a toaster out of the box ready made, nor like driving a car off the lot. Buildings are put together piece by piece. They are fit together.

The whole body, joined and held together by every joint ...makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. **Eph. 4:16**

This is a description of the church. It isn't just a preaching/ teaching centre (as important as that is). WE grow by being fitted to other believers to others who are connected to Christ. This means we intentionally deepen relationships by spending time

with each other. The one anothers of Scripture are only accomplished in relationship with other believers. Some believers hardly grow spiritually over many years because this kind of building is absent in their live

**Love one another with brotherly affection. Rom. 12:10**

**Live in harmony with one another. Rom. 12:16**

**Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you. Rom. 15:7**

**Comfort one another, agree with one another. 2Cor. 13:11**

**Bear one another's burdens. Gal. 6:2**

**Be kind to one another...forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Eph. 4:32**

**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. Col. 3:16**

**Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. James 5:16**

**Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 1Pet. 4:9**

Here's the point of all this. It's impossible to become a mature believer without having relationships in the church that are spiritual in nature.

What would you think about a family, where everyone saw each other once a week for one meal? Would you come to the

conclusion they were a happy family? A close family? A family you want to imitate?

In the same way, simply attending church once a week for a meeting, without spending time developing spiritually edifying relationships is like a family that eats together but only talks occasionally—something is broken.

This process leads to believers being established in the faith—that is— to believe with conviction the truths —the creed and practices— accepted by all orthodox believers everywhere.

That’s how believers live in a way that shows that Jesus is Lord of their life.

Now here’s the amazing part. All that leads up to **this big bold exclamation point** at the end of verse 7— “abounding in thanksgiving” ...or...(NIV) “overflowing with thankfulness”.

Yes—Spiritual Maturity is a Process Energized by Christ—But also

## **2. Spiritual Maturity is a Practice Exemplified by Gratitude (7b)**

If there is one thing that is to be continuous in our lives, it its gratitude. It’s the appropriate response to having been given so much in Christ. It is to mark our lives every day—all the time:

*Paul frequently employed thankfulness as one of the litmus tests of Christian health. He assumed that Christians would live in an attitude of thankfulness for the many blessings bestowed upon*

*them. By contrast, one of the first indicators of departure from God is a lack of thanksgiving.* Richard R Melick Jr

**Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1Th. 5:18**

**Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col. 3:17**

**We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. Col. 1:3**

Over time I have realized that gratitude is a huge theme of Scripture.

I want to highlight just one aspect of gratitude that you might not have considered before.

So the application of the message is being grateful all the time—in every circumstance . But the specific application of gratitude I want to introduce you too is **using gratitude to quench sin.**

Let me give you two Scriptures to help you think about this.

The first is found in Eph 5:3-4:

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but *instead let there be thanksgiving.* Eph. 5:3-4



In these verses, Thanksgiving is presented as the antidote to sexual sin—both the desire, the language of, and the acting out of sexual sin.

The question is how does this work? Why is thanksgiving given this kind of power? How does it work in quenching sexual sin? If you go back to Genesis in the garden with Adam & Eve, I think we find the answer.

Here's a question for you. Do you remember what God commanded Adam & Eve about eating from trees in the garden?

If you are like most people, you will remember this verse:

Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. **Gen. 2:17**

That's what most people remember about God's command to Adam & Eve in the garden. But did you know that's only half of it? Here's the half that most people don't remember:

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "**You may surely eat of every tree of the garden**, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." **Gen. 2:16-17**

We remember the one thing denied. We forget the hundreds, perhaps thousands of trees permitted. God was being generous with them, not stingy.

Now if you look at Genesis 3:1 we have the temptation of the serpent.

The serpent...said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" **Gen. 3:1**

This is THE classic temptation that works on just everybody.

The bounty, generosity & goodness of God is not even acknowledged or expressed. But doubt is injected. A twisting of the command to make it a total prohibition. A focus on what is denied—and obscuring all that is given in abundance.

Adam and Eve forgot to be thankful, and in that forgetting they became fixated on what they couldn't have. If they had been grateful for all the trees in the garden that were available to them they would not obsess over what was denied them.

That's how thankfulness quenches lust and sexual sin.

When we are aware of all the good that God has given us, you won't be obsessed with the failures of your passive husband, or the 25 pounds your wife has put on since the wedding day, or that annoying habit he has that so bothers you.

Gratitude, when expressed, prevents us from breaking boundaries and plunging ourselves into destructive behaviours.

So let's express gratitude in our prayers. In our conversations about the world around us. Let's take time to thank others around us—our families, our spouses, our friends. Let's abound in thanksgiving. Let that be the mark of our church—not the winners and complainers—but the grateful ones.

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. **Col. 2:6-7**