

# The Paradox of growth in holiness

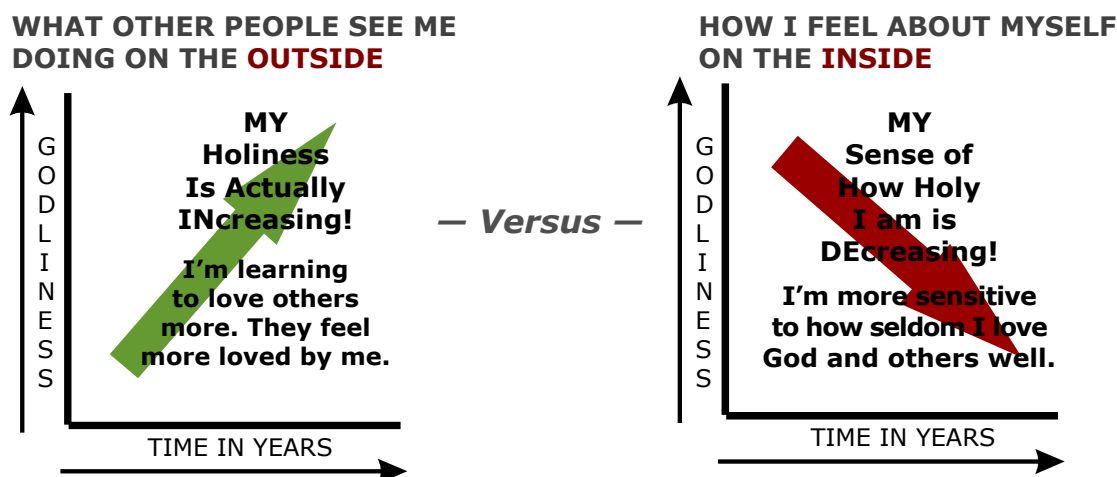
## **the Cross Chart introduced**

**Our rather bizarre sounding thesis:** As you grow stronger, you will feel weaker; as you become more holy, you will feel less holy.

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## **Our rather bizarre thesis graphed**

**Remember:** According to Jesus, James, Paul and John, the true measure of holiness is not mere outward compliance to the Ten Commandments, but perfect love toward God and our neighbour.



**We assume:** "Truly mature Christians don't sin. I sin, therefore I'm spiritually immature."

**The truth:** More mature Christians may sin less than immature ones, but, because they're more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's work, they *feel* like bigger sinners. Not only can they see the outward *fruits* of sin in their words and actions, they can also discern the *roots* of those sins in their hearts.

## **The apostle Paul's self-image**

(as noted by J.I. Packer in Keep in Step With the Spirit, Fleming H. Revell, 1984, p. 106)

**Is this a case study in declining self-esteem? (Play the shrink.)**

**A.D. 54 - 1 Corinthians 15:9** "For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." (1:13)

**A.D. 61 - Ephesians 3:8** "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ..." (approx. 1:100,000?)

**A.D. 65 - 1 Timothy 1:15** "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." (approx. 1:350,000,000)

**"Oh come off it! All this talk about seeing your sin is terribly neurotic!"** Thus accused, my late friend Dr. Jack Miller replied, "Not really. The person who thinks often of his sins, is sorry for them and repents of them is not 'neurotic.' A neurotic is someone who endlessly repeats the same sins over and over again but will not accept correction or change."

**Dr. Dan Allender, noted Christian psychologist and author says,** "Growth never feels like maturity. If you think you're mature, you're not. If you think you're not, you may be, but you'll be the last one to know. Growth feels like death. Are you thirsty? Thirst will produce sanctification. The Pharisees were not thirsty; they had no needs. The Publican had nothing but need." (re: spiritual thirst, see: Isa.55:1-3; Jn.7:37)

**What do you think?** Is it possible that Paul's incredible productiveness in Jesus' Kingdom was in *direct proportion* to his weakness and the way it forced him to rely wholly on his daily communion with Jesus for strength? Is that significant for you and me? **Oh yes! TO THE CROSS CHART!** ➡