



Title: Walking Differently
Theme: Growing in the Grace of God
Series: Living in the Aroma of God's Grace

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever!" (2 Peter 3:18)

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The Word of God says much about what the Lord would like to see in His children. The Holy Spirit moved through the Apostle Paul to write about living as children of Light, "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts..."

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way... You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:17-24)

Men of this world are captivated by how other people live their lives, they observe what governs their lives and are intrigued by what motivates them.

I would propose to you that God's heartfelt desire is to have an intimate relationship with us and see us be transformed into the image of Christ. Christ-like character is a growing process, much like the raising of a child to adulthood.

Just what are three Biblical processes that must be continually applied in order for a child of God to die to self, ignore the world's influences and dispute the lies of the devil?

The Holy Spirit moved through the Apostle Peter to write about a truth that must be grasped in order for Christians to live Spirit-filled lives. Grasping this truth enables the children of God to enjoy God's growing grace peacefully. He writes, "His Divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of [Christ] who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the Divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Just as a baby cannot grow to manhood on his own, a born again Christian must have God's grace to grow to maturity. The Lord through His Divine power gives us what we need to become mature Christians.

Good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace

Christians are to be strengthened by God's grace not through obeying rules through their own attempts. Hebrews 13:9 says, "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them." (Hebrews 13:9) Romans 14:17-18 says, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men." (Romans 14:17-18) It is important to note that it is difficult to determine the exact meaning of Hebrews 13:9 with regard to what false teaching were being presented. I believe the Lord did it this way for a reason.

This passage of Scripture is generic so it can stand against teachings or religious observances of any kind that would take people from worshiping in spirit and truth in any generation. There is so much that comes up in the church that Satan uses to cause Christians to lose their focus upon Christ and on what He has done. There has always been that danger of the ideas of man bringing false teaching into the church of Christ. It must be understood the issues of what someone was eating or how it was being eaten in Hebrews and in Romans was only an outward reflection of the serious heart problem of man trying to reach God or please God by his own efforts. This same heart problem is very much alive today, but has different manifestations.

There is nothing more destructive to true Christianity than placing it in modes, and forms, and circumstances. All forms of spiritual cancers that are bringing spiritual death began from healthy teachings, man just got in the way. We do not have a major problem with people trying to get right with God or seeking His favors through some kind of ritual meals right now. However, many have taken that which once brought focus on Christ's works, and reducing it to rituals that show outward religiosity or visibility in order to gain favor from God.

Pastor Carter Conlyn once preached a message titled, "Run for Your Lives" in which he urges that people of God not sit in places where the Word of God is not preached nor where it has been replaced with false teaching and dead worship. Warren Wiersbe wrote, "We must be careful no to go beyond the [whole] council of God's Word... It is unfortunate that there is not more doctrinal preaching today because Biblical doctrine is the source of strength and growth in the church."

Even though God has not revealed to us exactly what the false teachings were at the time of the writing of Hebrews 13:9, there is one truth the Lord wants Christians to grasp, they are to get their spiritual strength from Him. This is why the Holy Spirit had the writer of Hebrews write, "It is good for our hearts to be strengthen by grace."

The Holy Spirit speaks so clearly through the Apostle Paul and I believe to be a plea from God on what true worship is “For the kingdom of God is... righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.” (Romans 14:17-18)

There are some things in that are essentials of Christianity on which the children of God are to agree and pursue with great zeal. Instead of striving to be seen as religious or trying to gain favors from God, Christians are to be hungry for His righteousness in their hearts.

A Holy Spirit illuminated child of God walks differently from someone who tries to gain favor from God by works. A Christian knows that it is by God’s grace through Christ they have become a part of the “Kingdom of God,” the Church of Christ on earth. (Barnes Notes; Thru the Bible; The Pulpit Commentary) Lange defines this kingdom as “The heavenly sphere of life in which God’s Word and Holy Spirit govern, and whose organ on earth is the church.”

This grace from the Lord makes them hungry for the “righteousness” of God. Jesus said “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” (Matthew 5:6) “Righteousness” (*dikaiosune*) is that heart desire to conform to all that the Word of God teaches because the Lord has revealed the righteousness of Christ through it. The righteousness of God is His claim on a blood purchased church.

In order for the child of God to receive the righteousness of God into his life he must accept it as being a gift from God through Christ. (Romans 5:17) This hunger for righteousness enables the child of God to live life well and pleasing to God out of love for Christ. Christians who claim their righteousness through Christ get the promised regenerating action of the Holy Spirit working in and through them.

The Books of Romans gives an exhortation for those who desire to be seen walking differently for the Lord Jesus. “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey-- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ...You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.” (Romans 6:16-18) Sin comes as a hunger wanting to be satisfied. The repentant sinner gets from the Lord a hunger for the righteousness of God.

In the Antarctic summer of 1908-1909, Sir Earnest Shackleton and three companions attempted to travel to the South Pole from their quarters. They set off with four ponies to help carry the load. As time progressed, their ponies died. Rations all but gone, they turned back toward their base, their goal not accomplished. All together they traveled 127 days. On their return journey they spent their time talking about food – elaborate feasts, gourmet delights, and sumptuous menus. As they staggered along not knowing if they would survive, every waking hour was occupied with thoughts of eating. (The Heart of the Antarctic; 10,000 Sermon Illustration)

This is the type of hunger referred to by Jesus when He said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Christians who walk differently than those who live in this world are constantly hungering for the Lord's presence, hungry for the Word to be taught and proclaimed, they are hungry for Christian fellowship, anything that is centered around the things of God and the work of the Lord Jesus. They are constantly talking about Christ, considering how they will feed themselves the Word of God.

They spend every waking moment meditating on how their day will bring glory to God, considering the teaching of the Word of God before making decisions, making arrangements or planning schedules. This response to God's grace enables Christians to grasp the truth written by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:12-15, "Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." (Romans 8:12-14)

Walking with the Lord leads to peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which is first enjoyed in the Lord before it is passed on to our fellow man. These two graces can be experienced through Christ by walking in step with the Holy Spirit, thus producing fruit for all to see for the glory of Christ.

This "peace" (*eirene*) is the peace of God meaning to be absent of confusion. This peace brings a harmony meaning to bound, joined and woven together with God, Christ and with other Christians who manifest this fruit in their lives. There is joy for those walking differently than others for Christ's sake. This "joy" (*chara*) brings a great exultation for the Lord that springs from an inner gladness, causing a deep pleasure, bringing a depth of assurance and confidence expressed freely in the Christian's life. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary, of the New Testament)

It will not be asked at the great Day, "Who ate flesh, and who ate herbs?" "Who kept holy days, and who did not?" It will be asked, "Who found their strength in God's grace because they were hungry for the righteousness of God?"

Lord makes them in to a new creation

There is so much life to be expressed from Christians who rely upon God's grace for the strengthening of the spiritual heart. Christians are able to walk differently because the Lord makes them in to a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ..." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18) Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Jesus spoke with the Pharisee Nicodemus about the need of mankind becoming a new creation, the need of God to do a new work in mankind's life. He told Nicodemus that "...no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." The kingdom of God is more than being in heaven, it is enjoying that realm of life that is submitted to God's authority, thus enjoying all His blessings now and for eternity. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

Born "again," (*anthoen*) means to be born from above. This brings a transformation of a person so that he is able to walk in fellowship with God and Christ and in step with the Holy Spirit. Having been born again is a necessity before anyone can walk differently from those who live in this world system today.

Before a sinner comes to Christ in repentance he has a spiritual heart of stone. This heart is inflexible, unyielding and insensitive. It is not apt to receive from or have any devoted affection toward its Creator. A man with a heart of stone has no fellowship with the Lord. He does not do the will of God. He does only what seems right in his own eyes which leads to destruction.

God in His saving grace through Christ supernaturally gives repentant sinners a heart of flesh and puts His Spirit in them causing them to become a new creation in Christ. Born again Christians are able to be sensitive and alive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. They have fellowship with the triune God. Their way of living begins to change at the moment they receive Christ into their hearts. It is like Elder Don Malcolm has said often, "The Lord gives you a reason for living." This is a Divine truth. When the child of God seeks the Lord with all his heart, he gets God's grace involving direction and empowerment to walk to the beat of a different drummer than those who are blinded by the god of this age. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

I remember when I first received Christ into my heart, I told Bonnie that I was going to keep my friends, yet I would not do what I knew was wrong. I told my closest friend about my salvation experience.

Shortly after my conversion to Christ my friends invited Bonnie and me to a party they were having. They did what we had done before. They had barrels of beer, lots of food, course joking and dirty jokes.

At that party I felt like a fish out of water. It was so strange, that what I used to enjoy life now had no feeding to my heart. Bonnie and I left the party very early. As I was walking out the door, I knew that is was time to say bye to that old life and continue to walk in my new life in Christ and His church. I was a new creation in Christ that could not be satisfied by this world and the things in it any longer, I needed new food. I stop being a farrier for myself, hungry for fame and money. I started nailing shoes on horses feet for the Lord. I stopped watching films and listening to music that had worldly views and starting feeding my soul through films and music with content that is lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. (Philippians 4:8) Through God's grace I immediately started walking differently because the Lord made me into a new creation.

Transformed their thinking

Being a new creature in Christ enables old sinners to live differently thus bringing glory to Christ and God. They are able to do this because they have transformed their thinking. Romans 12:1,2 says "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--His good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)

Here we read of practical Christianity and the blessings of having a disciplined mind for Christ. The Holy Spirit illuminated children of God are motivated to make their bodies a living sacrifice when they consider the mercies of the Lord. Christians allow Jesus' ultimate sacrifice to motivate them to live lives that reflect the holiness of God and live lives pleasing to the Lord. They know that the body is meant to be used as an instrument of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 6:13) Every Christian I know who truly lives differently from those in this world lives as the Apostle Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

Holy living is accomplished by no longer conforming to the patterns set by this world's system. Holy living is accomplished through a renewed mind. This world tells you to work to get wealth, position and fame so you can satisfy self. The Bible teaches you stewardship. Christians are to develop their talents, use their spiritual gifts and their possessions for the good of others, especially in hopes of telling others about Christ or to edify the Body of Christ.

The mind is a continue battleground which Satan tries to mess up. He knows if he can take control of your thinking he can make you unproductive for Christ. The mind can cause us to waste hours and wear us down. It can become the birth place of bitterness, despair and suspicion.

Walking differently means to throw off carnal thinking by reading and meditating upon the Word of God. This can be done by regular Bible reading and study, by listening to Christian music, by reading about the works of great men and women of God, and by taking what the Lord has taught and shown you and teach it to others. It is imperative that a person be in constant fellowship with the Body of Christ that is hungry for the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul knew the battles of the Lord involved the battle for the mind. False arguments will come against the work of grace and the Cross of Christ.

In writing about these battles for the Lord Paul wrote, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Christians who follow the example of the Apostle Paul say with him, "...we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16) This means Christians are able to understand spiritual truths and get spiritual wisdom from God. As Christians seek the Lord with all their hearts and rely upon God's grace given by the Holy Spirit of Christ, they are able to determine His good and perfect will for them.

Warren Wiersbe wrote, "For many years now I have began each day by surrendering my body to the Lord. I spend time prayerfully reading and studying His Word and letting it transform my mind and control over my thinking for that day. I would yield in prayer the plans of the Lord for that day and ask Him for strength to accomplish His will. I especially prayed for those things that upset me and worried me. The Lord has always seen me through. Finding God's will always begins with a right relationship with the Lord, yielding to Him our bodies, minds and wills."

H.A Ironside told the true story of a young assistant in the Church of England who was greatly helped in his understanding of the Scriptures by frequent conversations with an uneducated cobbler, who was, nevertheless, well acquainted with the Word of God and full of Christ.

On one occasion when a friend of the assistant, a young theologian, was visiting, the assistant told the theologian about the cobbler's remarkable knowledge of the Bible and of his love for the Lord. In a spirit of pride the theologian wanted to meet cobbler.

Upon being introduced to cobbler in his shop, the theologian asked, "Can you tell me what the Urim and the Thummim are?"

The cobbler replied, "I don't know exactly; I understand that the words apply to something that was on the breastplate of the high priest. I know the words mean "Lights and Perfection," and that through the Urim and Thummim the high priest was able to discern the mind of the Lord. But I find that I can get the mind of the Lord by just changing some letters. I take this blessed Book, the Word of God and by "usin' and thummin," I get the mind of the Lord that way."

The Urim and Thummim were not used by major spiritual leaders such as Abraham, Moses, David or the prophets to determine God's will. The Urim and Thummim belonged to the nation Israel in its developing years. According to the Tyndale Bible Dictionary it was not used when there were prophets who walked close to God and especially since the Holy Spirit came into the believer's heart. According to Numbers 27:21 the high priest used them in discovering God's will. Exodus 28:20 says they were to be kept, "in the breastplate, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord."

Preachers do not use them today nor should they be expected to. It is a circumcised heart that causes preachers and Christian to walk differently. When the children of God are hungry for the righteousness of God, live as a new creation and transform their thinking they will walk in a way that causes everyone who sees their lives to consider Christ.

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