

'How to Grow in Grace'

by A.W. Tozer

Growing in grace requires a commitment to regular prayer, meditation, and study, as well as a right mental attitude and vigilance against worldly influences.

Scripture: 2 Peter 3:10

Topics: "Vigilance in Faith", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, drawing from Peter's exhortation to remain steadfast and vigilant against the temptations of the world. He warns against complacency and the dangers of being led astray by false teachings and societal pressures, urging believers to actively cultivate their faith through prayer, scripture reading, and fellowship. Tozer highlights the importance of intentionality in spiritual growth, comparing it to the care required for a garden, and encourages Christians to be witnesses for Christ in a world that often promotes tolerance over truth. He concludes with a call to prayer and a desire for a deeper revival in the church, urging believers to seek holiness and a closer relationship with God.

Transcript

How to Grow in Grace

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

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We may be very grateful to the Holy Spirit and to the man Peter who when he was very, very old and about ready to lay down his burden, said, wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance. Though ye know them and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this, my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me. Moreover, I will endeavor that you may be able, after my departure, to have these things always in remembrance.

Now, that was Peter in his second epistle. And he wrote a little further and then said, in 3:10, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with the great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought ye to be in

all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

Now, those last two verses, ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, why be careful, lest you be led away with the error of the wicked and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this is the language of the dear old apostle. Ye beloved, he says. I still believe, I've said it a number of times in various contexts, but I still believe that old Christians ought to be sweet, mellow Christians, and that we ought to get more mellow and gracious as we get older. We find it here very plain in this last epistle of Peter's, a perfect blend of tender love and severe faithfulness. Now one is necessary to the other, because without one, you will have only harm without the other. If a man is only filled with tenderest love, then he is likely to become sentimental, or he's likely to become so tender that he's harmful to those he ministers to. But, if on the other hand, he is simply faithful to truth, he's likely to injure with the very truth he is using to help people.

But Peter seemed to have both. He said, you, beloved, seeing ye know these things before. And he took a good measure, an account to see that we would have this before us long, long after he was gone. He said, seeing ye know these things. And what are these things? Well, the things named above, the certainty of judgment for all mankind. That God holds up actions and doesn't judge, not because He is careless, but because He's waiting for men to repent. And then, that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. And the fiery passing away of the whole creation is before us and is coming, and the establishment of a new creation for eternity. These are the things, at least some of the things that he referred to; and said, seeing you know these things.

And so, he held them before us as a reason for our Christian living. Then he said, if you know these things, beware. Now here's a red light. Here is a caution light. He said, you Christians, I'm going away from you and you're going to be left here in what he called a wicked and adulterous generation. And so, you're going to have to beware. That is, exercise moral caution.

Today, out in, I don't know how many towns throughout the United States and on highways between towns, there will be men, or young men maybe, driving without caution. I suppose we tend to get more cautious as we get older, but I've seen old men drive with anything but caution. But there will be a number of them, I couldn't tell you how many, I wish I could say none, but I know there will be many who will forget to exercise caution and will press on the gas and pull their great cars up to tremendous speeds and fail to, what the newspapers call, negotiate a curve. They mean they couldn't make the curve and a hit or go into a gully or hit a bank or a bridge and they will be gathered up dead. They will not pay any attention to the markings. The markings are not put there by mean policemen or nasty state troopers in order that they

might devil us. They're put there because a little way ahead, there's danger.

So, the man, Peter, said beware; not to take his spite out on the people. Neither do I repeat it because I have any grudges against anybody. It's just a sign here, slippery when wet, sharp curve ahead, "S" turn ahead, and a crossroad and railroad crossing-beware. It's just a sign on the way. And the moral fool disregards the sign, of course. He shrugs his shoulders, rushes on and perishes, but the wise man slows down and proceeds with caution and lives. And the man of God says, now you know what's ahead. Therefore, you Christians, beware lest you be led away by the world as others have been.

I don't know why I'm thinking about that fellow, that goat down at the stockyards that I've mentioned several times here, they call him Judas Iscariot. I can't get him out of my mind. They say he's down there. I've never seen him, but I've had it confirmed that they have him. He's a well-trained old goat with a deadly cynicism and complete cruelty, or else just ignorance. I don't know which. I hope it's the latter. And when they want a flock of sheep to go into a pen so they can get killed. They won't go in. They're afraid to go in being timid things. So, they start this old goat down and he leads them down the runway to the slaughter pen. Then, they open a gate and he goes out. They kill the sheep and he comes back and leads another flock down. That's his job. That's his occupation, leading innocent sheep astray. They call him Judas Iscariot.

And that Judas Iscariot is in the church here and there, too. And some people live only to betray others and to lead them away and to drag them down. And after they have betrayed them, they have very little interest in them after that. So, he says, lest ye should be led away. Always remember that unless you watch, you can be led. But always remember that everybody is led by someone. You say not me. I'm as hard as a rock and I am not led by anybody. Do you know that you are led by your newspaper, your radio, the magazines? You're led by Billboard, your schooling, your education, the people that talk to you. You are led by the history that you have read. You are led by the friends and associates and social companions. You are led, but you just don't know it.

I have been hearing of something that I think; Mr. Chase and I sometimes say good naturedly, that if it gets any worse, we'll hunt a cave and become monks. I don't think we ever will, but under circumstances, but I'm inclined a little more that way lately because I've heard of a strange thing. It is a subconscious, subaudible advertising they're putting on now on the radio. Your subconscious hears it but you don't hear it. You can hear, God knows, you can hear an anthem sung now in favor of everything.

But they are now not only going to give you the ones you can hear, but they now are giving you ones that come through on a wavelength that your ear doesn't receive, but your subconscious gets. And they keep plugging away at you like that. What is that but brainwashing? I wonder if we ought not to write our Senator and ask him if we can't stop a thing like that. Who knows, one of these days when he's going to rush out and buy a pink elephant? And his wife will say what's the matter with you, Charles? Well, Charles said, I don't really know. It just came on me, a desire to buy a pink elephant. And somewhere in Washington or New York or Chicago Loop, somebody has been advertising pink elephants on the subaudible wavelength.

And so, our subconscious gets all worked up. You're being led Brother, don't forget it; and you're being brainwashed. But it just depends upon who does it. If the Lord does it; if the Holy Ghost, does it, if it's washed by the water of the Word, then blessed are you. But you can be led astray. And the Scripture says watch it, that ye be led not astray.

Now, grow in grace rather than be led astray. Grow in grace. And I want to point out to you that whether it's a child or a garden, it has got to be cared for. There's got to be watchfulness and use of means. If you do not use means, we have a wilderness because nature will grow whether we like it or not. And the only way you can have a garden is to use means and care and thoughtful planning. Because if you don't use thoughtful planning and take care, you will have something growing out there all right, because nature will grow. But you'll have a wilderness. And the difference between a wilderness and a garden is that the wilderness grows without planning and the gardens is carefully planned. Grow in grace. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

I talked last week about backsliding, and I think it had some effect, because I've had a number of people talk about it, and not talk critically about it. That is, I didn't hear the criticisms if there were any. I heard the other side. But have you ever stopped to think how many times we've gone to altars and knelt at chairs and benches, and prayed and stood when the evangelists asked us to and have gone forward and renewed our vows and consecrations? Have you ever thought how often we've done that? Well, a lot have done it and I wonder how many have gone on then and grown in grace.

The Word of God says it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. But the Bible heroes vowed and kept their vows. And the Christian heroes since Bible times vowed and kept their vows. And there are those living now who have made vows and kept them. But we stand and we reassert our vows and reconsecrate over and over and over and over again down the years. It's like getting married again, taking your vows over and over and over and over again. Every time a new voice is heard, we come and take our marriage vows over again. I think it's silly. But we might as well do that as to be doing all of this vowing and standing and promising and never doing anything about it. It's better to vow and pay, but it's better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

I have been reading about this Henry Suso, Heinrich Suso. This Henry Suso, if you will allow us to anglicize him. He was an old Saint and I just been reading again about his conversion. He began to serve the Lord when he was, let's see, five off 18 would make 13, wouldn't it. When he was about 13, but he got no place. And he said he was quite contented just to keep out of the sins that would spoil his reputation. But as he went on trying to live a good life, why, a conviction for sin came on him. And he got under the burden, not only for the sins that would have ruined his reputation, but for the sins that would have ruined his relations with God. So suddenly, instantaneously, he was converted; converted just as suddenly and instantaneously as the flash of an eyelash.

Well, immediately after he was converted, he began to get moved inwardly to become a saint, to become a saintly young fellow. He was 18 then, and to seek the face of God and to put the world behind him and the flesh under his feet. And he said, immediately, the voice of the tempter said to him, now Henry, it's alright for you to be a Christian the way you've been, but you know, this, this saintly business, this desire to be an unusual Christian, that's awfully easy to talk about, but it's awfully hard to do.

And he said, he answered back and said, well, but God can help me. And he said, the voice of the Tempter said, Henry, God can help you, but will He? And he said, he went to the Word of God in prayer and settled that one. Then he said, I found that God not only could, but was willing to help anybody who wroughts righteousness in His name. So, when the voice of the Tempter couldn't get any further with him that way, why, the tempter got awfully smooth and soft and patted his back and said, All right, Henry, it's very good that God will help you. There's no question about that. But now why make a production out of it? Why push it so far? And why be unlike other people. Take it easy. Eat and drink and relax and be like the

other Christians around you. They expect to go to heaven. Why should you want to be any different from what they are?

Well, that was convincing enough, so he went to the Lord about that. And he said the voice of Eternal Wisdom said to me. I don't know what that was. It could have been the Holy Ghost or the Scriptures or the voice of God in him. But he said, the voice of Eternal Wisdom said to him, Henry, anybody who tries to catch a slippery eel by the tail, or who will try to begin the saintly life with a cool, lukewarm heart, both are foolish men. Henry heard that, and God said, Henry, don't let him talk you out of it. Remember one thing? Anybody who thinks he can serve God and live for the world is a fool. Don't try it. So, Henry said, all right, God, I will go on and I'll put the world and the flesh under my feet and sin behind me.

And he went awhile, and he was young, and he began to get discouraged. He had no help. So, he said, not having any help, I taught some of my Christian friends for a bit of consolation. And he said they shrugged and raised their eyebrows and said, no, I can't do it. This kind of thing can never come to any good end; this yearning after holiness, this desire to be all out on God's side. We knew nothing good would come out of it.

So he apologized and said, O God, he said, it's my fault. He said, I wouldn't have had to hear them if I hadn't gone and listened to them. So, he apologized. But he went on and he became one of the greatest saints of the 14th century. And today, we sing his hymns. And today, we warm our hearts at the fire of His mighty devotion. But he had some temptations to put behind him, some vows to keep. He listened to the voice of the Tempter and answered it in the name of the Lord. And when he couldn't get any help from his Christian friends, he said, I decided to go it alone. It wasn't very long until he had others following him.

It'll always be so. When you start out, determine that you're going to have the best God has for you, you won't have many who will understand you, but it won't be very long until people come to you. And the numbers are growing. And I stand in great encouragement to tell you that the number of those who are determined to put away, not only sin and the world and the flesh, but degenerate and decay in Christianity behind them and serve God after the Bible pattern-they're growing.

Mr. McAfee comes and tells me about a Dutch Reformed preacher from where? Holland, Michigan. And I just talked to a Presbyterian pastor the other day. Why, there are hungry men seeking the face of God, not many, but they're growing in numbers. And they come up out of not only one group, but they come up out of where you wouldn't expect them at all, seeking the face of God. They are there. You won't find many, but you'll find some.

And now grow in grace. How can I grow in grace? There won't be anything new here in this brief recital from here on. But you should hear it again, or you should hear it until you do something about it. Why, have you been reading the Word of God with meditation? Have you read a good portion of the Book daily, the sincere milk of the word. You haven't? How do you expect to grow in grace? How do you expect to keep healthy and resist the inroads of the virus of sin? How do you expect to be saved from the epidemic of iniquity that's all throughout the land, a pandemic, indeed, for it's everywhere.

Do you make time for private prayer? You come to church on Sunday. But if this is all you get, you certainly are in grave danger spiritually. Make time for private prayer and then learn to pray as you go. Learn to put things out of your mind. Sometimes I wake up at night and lo and behold, I'm thinking about myself, or something related to me or my family and I push it from me and say, O Holy Father, Holy Trinity, blessed Holy Savior, and try to turn my mind away from even my family and myself, because naturally we

gravitate to ourselves and our people. And on certain times, that's perfectly proper. God has given you your family to take care of them.

But I tell you, we ought to learn to pray when we go and as we go. And then I think we ought also to improve our mental attitude in church. I'm not satisfied at all with our church services. I'm not pleased, partly my fault, partly my ignorance, partly my lack of insight and spirituality, but I think we all ought to join to see whether we can't improve our mental attitude in church. Instead of joking out in front and joking up the stairway and all the rest, we ought to come with reverence, not into a building. There's nothing holy about this building of bricks, but into the presence of the great God, O God is here. Let us adore and own how holy is this place.

So, let's improve our mental attitude. Some are grieving God very greatly by their attitude in church, whispering, passing notes, and, or bored with the whole business. If the preaching is so bad, that it bores you, go somewhere else. Don't come here and endure me. I mean that. I'm not being nasty. I just mean that. If I'm inflicting something on you that puts you to sleep, in God's name, pray me out of here and get somebody that will keep you awake. But, if your sleepiness lies in your own heart, in your own failure to appreciate spiritual things, then let's put the blame where it belongs. If it's on me, I'll take it. But if it's on you, will you take it? And let us ask God whether we can't improve our mental attitude. We're grieving God. I'm sure we're grieving God by our failures. We're grieving Him by our failures in this thing.

And then, we ought to read. We ought to read good books. If you're over 10 years old, you ought not to read Christian fiction at all. Throw it out. You ought to read good books. There are good biographies. I was called to preach by reading a biography of a southern preacher. God's spoke to my heart when I read that biography. And there are missionaries all over the world that were called of God while they read, say, the life of Livingstone, the book that the Sunday school gave to some of the graduates this morning. So, let's get a hold of good books. You don't have to read trash.

Somebody says, oh, Mr. Tozer, I admit I don't read but I just don't have time. How much time do you spend waiting? Now, I ask you, how much time do you spend waiting? You know, I read lots of books. But you know, I rarely sit down to a book reading session, very rarely. I read them in between time. I take a bus up here and I read on the bus. I ride downtown; I read on the train. I wait for a train, and I read then. I wait to go to bed at night when I'm riding on a train, and I read then. You can get it read if you want to do it bad enough. So, while you're waiting and while you're arriving, and put some other things away, and read some good books, Christian biography, Christian devotional books, good sound, hard Christian theology. Read up on it, get it into your heart and so improve yourself.

And then take your stand as a witness and let people know where you stand. They're feeding us now a soft, baby, pre-cooked mash that any baby could eat. It's the mash of toleration and brotherhood. Don't hurt anybody's feelings. If you're with anybody and you find he's a Roman Catholic, don't hurt his feelings at all by talking about the Savior because he's got his religion. If you find he's an atheist, don't, don't hurt him. Be tolerant. Be kind. Be brotherly. And the more they feed us that tasteless mash, the further we get separated from each other and the worse the nations hate each other. In the hour when we are being brainwashed from Washington on the subject of toleration and brotherhood and religion, we're getting further and further apart, and our bombs are getting bigger and our guided missiles longer and our ability to kill more terrible. So, the whole thing is hogwash, and ought to be recognized as such. Be a witness For Jesus Christ. Tell somebody not later than tomorrow morning that you're a Christian see what it does for you.

I remember when I was a very young Christian, another fellow and I, just two of us, neither one of us could sing, so we didn't have a singing service, but we used to ride to Kent, Ohio. Kent, Ohio was a little town. We went to the mayor and asked him whether we could have street meetings. He took us good naturedly. I think rather with a grain of salt or maybe a whole pinch and said, sure, sure boys, you can have street meetings. And we used to go up there like an ox to the slaughter, you know, hating to do it. Oh, how I hated it because I never was much for approaching people anyway. I'd never make a salesman. I would walk past the door five times rather than push the button, the doorbell; but we'd get up on the street and I'd start to yell. And somebody would say, well now, just exactly what happened to him? And they would turn around and begin to gather and pretty soon in that little town of Kent, I would have great crowd listen to me.

And my brother-in-law was along. And he wasn't anything of a preacher. He was a slow-talking southerner who kept his voice low. But His face shone in those days with the light of God. And after I had preached until I had worn myself out, I put him on to testify. And then after we would close, we would get on what they call nowadays, an inter-urban, a streetcar that ran between towns. Oh, what a relaxation and joy and delight on the way home. I had done it. I didn't want to do it. It wasn't the thing I liked to do. I'm not born for that kind of thing. I have met men that never saw a stranger.

I know a preacher friend of mine who went up to Washington and the United Nations. And where he was ready to sit and they were waiting on Mrs. Roosevelt, Mrs. Roosevelt, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. My preacher friend walks in, and I don't know how he wormed it, but somehow, he got in touch with Ms. Roosevelt. And he stood there and talked about God for 15 minutes to Mrs. Roosevelt while United Nations waited. Yeah!

That same fellow went to Eastman Kodak Company, and he walked into with a big smile and said, I want to see the President. Well, the Secretary said the President is in a meeting of the Board of Directors. He can't see you now. He said, I can't wait. I want to see the President now. Well, who are you? Well, I'm Reverend so and so. She said, well, I'll go to him. So, she went off rather tiptoeing in and not knowing whether it means her job, right, but what. She said, you know, Mr. So and so, there's a preacher outside who wants to see you, a preacher. He says, just relax a few minutes. Have a coffee break, he said, I'll go talk to preacher.

So, he went out and there stood my friend. And he talked to him about God. And this Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Eastman Kodak Company, a multi-million-dollar concern, broke down and cried and wept like a baby and said, Reverend, I've been around this town, I'm well known. But up to now, you're the first man that ever talked to me about my soul or about Jesus Christ.

And the big shots of the Board of Directors twiddled their thumbs while this preacher, now, he can do that. There, he's got that. But I couldn't do that. If I went in and said, I want to see the President, they'd motion to a cop. And they would say, would you lead this, out? Would you lead it out, please. They wouldn't even say he.

So, you see, brethren, we're not all alike. And we can't all do the same thing. But we ought to be at the disposal of the Holy Ghost. And if God leads you to do some hard, impossible thing, go do it. And if you go like an ox to the slaughter, you will come away feeling like a lamb that hasn't been slaughtered.

Well, and separate yourself from pollution, all kinds of pollution, bad Company, bad habits, bad books. Begin to spread to the light. That's the positive side of last Sunday's talk. I talked last Sunday on

backsliding and how we are bent to backslide. And I tell you, my friend, there's a gravitational pull. There's a moral, gravitational tug that is just as strong as the natural law of gravity. And it'll pull you down and pull you down and flatten you out and mix you with the earth. And you've got to rise above it by taking the means of grace that God affords you; the prayer and the Word of God and the prayer meeting and the church service and testimony and witnessing and praying as you go and mingling with good people. If you can't find any, then read a book about a good fellow. That's next best. But somehow see that your fellowship is with the saints.

Many fall from their own steadfastness, because they don't go clear over on God's side. They get converted and then they listen to the voice of the Tempter. And the voice of the Tempter says, now take it easy. Take it easy. You see all these Christians? They're all going to heaven. Why should you be unusual? I stand to tell you, if you won't be an unusual Christian in this backslidden age, you won't be much of a Christian at all. For the man who is much of a Christian is bound to be unusual.

If you were all as the whole city of Chicago were composed of little roots, four feet tall, I'd be an unusual man. I'm five foot 10. And in a Christian society where we're pygmies, the man has got to be determined to be unusual to stand out.

Well, the wrecks are everywhere confirming the Word of God. The sad, miserable wrecks are everywhere. Because iniquity shall abound, the love of the many shall wax cold. But they that continue on to the end, the same shall be saved.

We've had that explained away, but it's in the Book, and Jesus Christ said it and I can't explain it away. Whatever dispensation that applies to or whomsoever it belongs, the principle lies there. They that persevere the same shall be saved. Somebody would say that's Arminianism. Brother McAfee was reading out of the Calvinistic catechism to me this morning. You know what it said? It said, the grace of God that saved a man also worked in him to make him persevere and go on. That's Calvinism mind you. To say that Calvinists say that you get saved and once in grace, always in grace. And from that time on you can put out your wings and you'd be borne home to heaven. They don't.

That's a misunderstanding and a misapplication. John Calvin never said it. He believed in a rebirth. He believed in a renewed life. He believed in a Spirit-filled life. He believed in a sanctified life. Why should we hide behind any misinterpretations of ancient theology when the Holy Ghost says, they that continue faithful unto the end, the same shall be saved. Saved up out of the wreck it means of course. Saved up out of the woe of the world. And for the moment it's not talking about justification, but salvation out from the wreckage and rubble of the world.

Well, shall we go on? There are signs that God is blessing here and there. For a few days, we've got the next few days, I am to spend time preaching with James Stewart to the European Evangelistic Society; R.R Brown with Stacy Woods of InterVarsity, with numbers of others; Paris Reidhead and R.S. Roseberry. I don't know what will come out of it.

But O Brethren, won't you pray that God somehow or other, there are people everywhere hungry, but we're not organized. We're not together, we're wasting our sweetness on the desert air if you will excuse the expression. I wonder if God won't raise up some fellow like a Reidhead or somebody else who is young enough and vigorous enough to pull this all together. And perhaps the Holy Ghost will bring a new kind of revival to the world that won't just scrape the surface but will go down to the roots in human living so that we may be saved from our sins and from ourselves and from the world and from iniquity and from

our past and from our present; saved unto a life of saintliness and holiness before God. Won't you pray? Won't you spend a lot of time praying for this?

Tonight, I preach my third sermon on worship. I can hardly wait. I could wish I could start now. I had such a marvelous time preparing it. If the music tonight is anything like it was last Sunday night, I look forward to that with great relish and delight. God bless you. Try to come back.

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