

How to Grow in Grace

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of growing in grace through diligent remembrance, prayer, and a balanced approach to faith and love.

Duration: 36:04

Scripture: Matthew 24:13, Romans 8:24, 1 Corinthians 15:58, James 1:27, 1 Peter 1:15-16, 2 Peter 3:16-17

Topics: "Growing In Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on his reluctance to approach people and share the word of God. Despite his initial hesitation, he and his brother-in-law, a preacher, would gather crowds and preach the message of salvation. The preacher expresses his hope for a revival that will deeply impact humanity, saving them from sin and leading them to a life of holiness. He also mentions his excitement for his upcoming sermon on worship and the joy he finds in preparing for it. The sermon emphasizes the importance of being led by God rather than being influenced by worldly sources. The preacher shares a personal anecdote about a high-ranking businessman who was deeply moved when someone spoke to him about his soul and Jesus Christ. The sermon concludes with a warning about the subtle influence of subconscious advertising and the need to be aware of the sources that shape our thoughts and beliefs.

Transcript

I am very grateful to the Holy Spirit and to the man, Peter, when he was very, very old and about ready to lay down his burden. Wherefore, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of them and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet as long as 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 showed me.

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, The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the world shall be burned up, seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what was achieved to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be, 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.

Therefore, beloved, that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless. The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom, hath written unto you also in all his epistles, speaking in them of things in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable rest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction. Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things, beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall in steadfastness.

But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Glory both now and forever. Amen.

Now those last two verses, ye, therefore, beloved, know these things before. Why, be careful, lest ye 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. 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 mellow and gracious as we get older. And we find it here very pleasant, the 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 have harm. Without the other. If a man is only filled with tenderest love, then he is likely to become sentimental or he is likely to become so tender that he is harmful to those he ministers to.

But if, on the other hand, he is simply faithful to truth, he is injured 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 to account this, would have this before us long, long after he was gone.

He said, Seeing ye know these things, and these things, well, the things named above, the certainty of judgment for all mankind, holds up action and doesn't judge, not because he is careless, but because he is waiting for him. And then that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, and that the passing away of their whole creation is before us and is coming, and the establishment of a new created eternity, this, these are the things, at least some of the things that he referred to and said these things, and so he held them before us as a reason for our Christian living. Then ye know these things, beware.

Now here is a red light. Here is a caution light. He said, Christians, I am going away from you, and you are going to be left here in what he later, other were called wicked and adulterous generation.

And so you are going to have to beware. That is exercise moral caution. Today out, I don't know in how many towns throughout the United States and on highways between, there will be men, or young men maybe, driving without caution.

I suppose we tend 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 I could say none, but I know there will be many who will forget to exercise caution, who will press on the gas and pull their great cars up to tremendous speeds and fail papers called negotiate a curve, they mean they couldn't make the curve, and hit, go into a gully or a bridge, and they will be gathered up dead. They will not pay any attention to the markings, markings are not put there by mean policemen or nasty state troopers, that they might devil us, they are put there because a little way ahead there is danger.

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

I don't know how I'm thinking about that goat down at the stockyards, that I've mentioned several times here, they call Judas is carried, I can't get him out of my mind. They say they've seen him, but I've had it confirmed that they have him. And he's a well-trained old goat with a devilish cynicism, 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, 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 away 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 to his job, that's his occupation, leading innocent sheep astray. They call him Judas is carried. Judas is carried, is in the church here and there too, and some people live only to lead them away and to drag them down.

And after they have betrayed them, they have no one in them after that. So he says, lest ye should be led away. Always remember that you can be led, but always remember that everybody is led by someone.

You say my heart is a rock and I am not led by anybody. Do you know that you are led by your newspaper, your magazines, you're led by billboards, 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 if Mr. Chase and I naturally that if it gets any worse, we'll hunt a cave and become monks.

I don't think we ever will, but I'm inclined a little more that way lately because I've heard of a strange thing. A subconscious, sub-audible 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 anthems sung now, everything. But they are now not only going to give you the ones you can hear, but they now are giving you what comes through on a wavelength that your ear doesn't receive, but your subconscious gets. And they keep plugging up that.

What is that but brainwashing? I wonder if we ought not to write our senator and ask if we can't stop a thing. 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, you know, it just came on me, a desire to buy a pink elephant. And somewhere in Washington or New York or Chicago, Luther has been advertising pink elephants on a sub-audible wavelength.

And so our subconscious gets. 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 if you pray, and the scripture says, watch it that she be led not astray. Now, growing grace, not astray, growing grace. And I want to point out to you that whether it's a child or a garden, it is for.

There's got to be watchfulness and use of means. If we do not use means, we have a wilderness. Because nature will grow whether we like it or not.

And the only way to have a garden is to use means and care and thoughtful planning. If you don't use thoughtful planning and take care, you'll have something growing out there, all right, because nature will. But you'll have a wilderness.

And the difference between a wilderness and a garden is that the wilderness grows in the gardens carefully planned. Growing grace. Growing grace.

And in them is Christ, our Savior and Lord. I talked last week about backsliding, and I think it had some effect because 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 others. But have you ever stopped to think how many times we've gone to altars and knelt at chairs and benches and prayed and the evangelists ask us to and have gone forward and renewed our vows and consecrations? Have you ever thought about that? Well, a lot have done it, and I wonder how many have gone on then The word of God says it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. But the Bible heroes vowed their vows, and the Christian heroes since Bible times vowed and kept their vows.

And there are those who have made vows and kept them. But we stand and we reassert our vows and reconsecrate over and over again down the years. It's like getting married again, taking your vows over and over and over and over again.

A new voice is heard, we come and take our marriage vows over again. I think it's silly, but we might as to be doing all of this vowing and standing and promising and never doing anything about it. Vow and pay, but it's better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

I've been reading Henry Sousa, Heinrich Sousa, this Henry Sousa, if you will allow us to anglicize him. He was an old saint who lived in the 20th century, and I've just been reading his conversion. He began to serve the Lord when he was, let's see, five off of 18 would make 13, wouldn't it? 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. 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 flesh. Well, immediately after he was converted, he began to get moved inwardly to become a saint, a 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, he said immediately, the voice of the tempter said to him, Now, Henry, it's all right for you to be a Christian, but do you know this saintly business, this desire to be an unusual Christian? That's 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 prayer and settled that one.

And he said, I found that God not only could, but was willing to help anybody who was in his name. So when the voice of the tempter couldn't, or the tempter couldn't get any further with him, that way, by the smooth and soft, he patted his back and said, All right, Henry, it's very good. God will help you.

Not 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? Well, that was convincing enough. So he went to the Lord about that.

And he said, the voice of eternal wisdom said, I don't know what that was. It could have been the Holy Ghost or the scriptures or the voice of God. But he said, the voice of eternal wisdom said to him, Henry, anybody who tried to catch a slippery eel by the tail or tried to begin the saintly life with a cool, lukewarm heart, both are men.

And Henry heard that. And God said to Henry, Don't let him talk you out of it. Remember, anybody who thinks he can serve God and live for the world is a fool.

Don't try it. Henry said, All right, God. I'll go on.

I'll put the world and the flesh under my feet and sin behind me. And he went a while. He began to get discouraged.

He had no help. So he said, Not having any help, I sought some of my Christian friends' consolation. And he said, They shrugged and raised their eyebrows and said, No, I know 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 he said, Oh, God said it's my fault. He said, I would have left 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 alone.

It wasn't very long until he had others following him, and along you start out determined that you're going to have the best God has for you. You won't have many who will understand. It won't be very long until people come to you.

And the numbers are growing. And I stand in great encouragement that the number of those who are determined to put away not only sin and the world and the flesh, but in decadent Christianity behind them and serve God after the Bible pattern, they're growing. Mr. McAfee comes in.

A vedeteran foreign 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. 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're 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 and there 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? Seer, milk of the Word. If you haven't, how do you expect to grow in grace? How do you expect to keep the roads of the virus of sin? How do you expect to be safe from the epidemic of iniquities off the land? 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 prayer, and then learn to pray as you go. Learn to put things out of your mind.

Sometimes I wake up at night and long to think about myself or something related to me or my family, and I push it from me and say, Oh, holy Trinity, blessed, holy Savior, and try to turn my mind away from even my family and myself. Naturally, we gravitate to ourselves and our people, and on certain times, that's perfectly proper. God's given you your family to take care of.

But I tell you, we ought to learn to pray when we go and as we go. I think we ought also to improve our mental attitude in church. I'm not satisfied at all with our church service.

I'm not pleased. 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. Instead of joking out in front and joking up the stairway and all the rest, we ought to come into a place, not into a building.

There's nothing holy about this building of bricks, but the presence of the great God. Oh, 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, and or bored with the whole business. If the preaching is so bad, 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 somebody's sleep in God's name, pray me out of here. And get somebody that'll keep you awake.

But if your weakness lies in your own heart, in your own failure to appreciate spiritual things, then 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 ten years old, you ought not to read Christian fiction at all. Throw it out.

You ought to read good books, biographies. I was called to preach by reading the biography of a Southern preacher. It spoke to my heart when I read that biography.

And there are missionaries all over the world that were called of God's name to 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 it. 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? I ask you, how much time do you spend waiting? You know I read lots of books, but you know I rarely do a book-reading session? Very rarely. I read them in between time.

I take a bus up here, and I read on the bus. In town, 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 writing, 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 writing, put other things away and read some good books, Christian biography, Christian devotional books, good sound theology.

Read up on it. Get it into your heart, and so improve yourself. And then take your stand and let people know where you stand.

They're feeding us now a baby pre-cooked mash that any baby could eat. It's the measure of toleration and brotherliness and brotherhood. Don't hurt anybody's feelings.

Go with anybody, and you'll 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 that, don't hurt him.

Be tolerant, be kind, be brotherly. And the more they feed us that tasty mash, the further we get separated from each other, and the worse the nations hate each other. When we're being brainwashed from Washington on the subject of toleration and brotherhood, we're getting further and further apart, and our bombs are getting bigger and our guided missiles longer, and so the whole thing is hogwash.

Be recognized as such. Be a witness for Jesus Christ. Tell somebody not later than tomorrow morning.

See what it does for you. Remember when I was a very young Christian, 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. Went to the mayor to see whether we could have street meetings. He took us good-naturedly, I think rather with a grain of salt or maybe a little 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. Approaching people. Walked past the door five times rather than push the button, the doorbell.

But we'd get up on the street. I'd start to yell. And some would come and begin to gather.

And pretty soon in that little town of Kent, I would have a great crowd listening to me. And my brother-in-law was along, a preacher. He was a soldier.

His voice low, but his face was with the light of God. And after I'd preached until I'd worn myself out, I'd put him on to testify. And then after we'd closed, we'd get in those days an interurban, a streetcar that ran

between towns.

Oh, what a relaxation and joy and delight. One of the things I liked to do, the United Nations were ready to sit. On Mrs. Roosevelt.

Mrs. Roosevelt. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. My preacher friend walks in.

And somehow he got in touch with Mrs. Roosevelt. And he stood there and talked about God for 15 minutes to Mrs. Roosevelt while the United Nations waited. That same fellow went to the Eastman Kodak Company.

And he walked in and said, I want to see the President. Well, I can't see you now. He said, I see the President.

Well, who are you? Well, I'm Reverend so-and-so. He said, going in, didn't know a preacher outside. So he went in.

And he talked to him about God. And this chairman of the directors of the Eastman Kodak Company, a multimillion dollar concern, broke down and cried and said, Reverend, I've been around this town. I'm well known.

But up to now, you're the only thing that ever talked to me about my soul or about Jesus Christ. And the big shots of the board of directors twiddled their thumbs. Well, this preacher, now, he can do that, friend.

There, he's got that. But I couldn't do that. If I went in and said I, they'd motion to a cop.

And they would say, would you leave this out? Out, please. They wouldn't even say he. So you see, brethren, we're not all allowed.

And if you go like an ox to the slaughter, you'll come away feeling like a lamb. It hasn't been slaughtered. And separate yourself from pollution, all kinds of pollution.

Bad company, bad habit, bad books. Just spread the light. And that's the positive side of last Sunday's talk.

I talked last Sunday on backsliding and how we're. And I tell you, my friend, there's a gravitational pull. There's a moral gravitational tug that's just as strong to log gravity.

And it'll pull you down and pull you down and flatten you out and mix you. 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 church service and testimony and witnessing and praying as you go and good people.

If you can't find any, then read a book about a good fellow. That's next best. But somehow get your fellowship and see that you're saints.

Many fall from their own steadfastness because they don't go clear over on God's side. And then they listen to the voice of the tempter. And the voice of the tempter says, now take it easy.

Take it easy. See, all these are going to heaven. Why should you be unusual? I stand to tell you, if you are an unusual Christian in this backslidden age, you won't be much of a Christian at all.

Who is much of a Christian is bound to be unusual. If you were all, if the whole city of Chicago were composed of eight tall, I'd be an unusual man. I'm five foot ten.

And in a Christian society where we're pygmies, we're determined to be unusual, to stand out. Well, the wrecks are affirming the word of God. The sad, miserable wrecks are everywhere.

Because iniquity shall abound, the love of the Mexico, the day that continue unto the end, the same shall be saved. We've had that explained. Oh, a book in Jesus Christ said it, and I can't explain it away.

Whatever dispensation it applies to or to whomsoever lies there, they that persevere, the same shall be saved. They say that's Arminianism. I had Brother Magathe was reading out of a Calvinistic catechism to me this morning.

You know what it said? The grace of God that saved a man also worked in him to make him persevere and go on. That's Calvinism, mate. Don't you say that Calvinists say that you get saved and then once in grace, always in grace, and from that time on you can put out your wings and you'd be born again.

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? They that continue faithful unto the end, the same saved up out of the wreck, it means, 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, week after next, a few days, I am to spend time preaching with James Stewart, European Evangelistic Society, R.R. Brown, Tracy Whitney, with Harris Reedhead and Larry. I don't know what will come out of it, but all brethren, won't you pray that God somehow or other, but we're not organized.

We're not together. We're wasting our sweetness on the desert air, if you'll excuse the expression. I wonder if God won't raise up some fellow like Reedhead or somebody else who's young enough and vigorous enough.

Pull this all together. Perhaps the Holy Ghost will bring a new kind of revival to the world. It won't just scrape us down to the roots of human living so that we may be saved from our sins and from ourselves and from the world and from iniquity and from our present and saved unto a life of saintliness and holiness before God.

Won't you pray? Won't you? I am praying for this. Tonight I preach my third sermon on worship. I can hardly wait.

I 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 a relish and delight.

God bless you.

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