

Don't Just Do Something, Stand There!

When Jack Nicklaus was the greatest golfer in the world, he had a strange yearly routine. He would always take at least four months off, between golf seasons and never play or practice during that time. Then, every year before the new season began he would go down to Florida, make an appointment with his teacher Jack Grout, and say: "Mr. Grout, will you teach me to play golf?" Coach Grout would say sure, this is the way to hold a club; this is the way to stand over the ball ...

What Nicklaus understood was, to be the best, you do not have to run after the newest thing, or run after the newest method. To be the best in Golf, you must do the fundamentals better than anyone else does them.

This week we are going to be studying – sanctification – sometimes called growth in grace, or phase two, that life of growth between the moment when we are converted and the day we pass into glory.

The first thing I want you to understand, and the most important for you to understand, is that the principle of our growth is exactly the same as the principle of our conversion. We grow by increasingly putting our faith in Jesus Christ and repenting of our sin.

Yet we do not believe that. We believe that we must go and do something else, go on to the next step. I can prove that easily – what seminars do you want to go to? What do you want to learn how to do?

- most of us have no idea that fellowship is essentially the same as evangelism
- the same is true of marriage, child rearing, etc. etc.

We feel our inadequacy, and we urgently want to run and do something, we want to get something right, so we can be safe. And Paul screams NO, don't run, don't walk, don't move. Don't just do something stand there. Stay right where you are, that is the only safe place.

Colossians 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,

Galatians 3:1-5 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? 5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

Why don't we stand there? Why should we stand there? What can we take away with us?

1. We do not believe Christ has done enough.

We have two disconnects that cause our trust in Jesus to waver.

First, In our zeal to extend the kingdom of God, we have left one huge thing out. We have left repentance out. Calling people to faith only, we have told them they only need to believe. Thus we have a country full of people who believe that Christ died on the cross, but who have no intention of changing. This disconnect has forced many to divide the Church into different kinds of Christians. Good Christians, and bad Christians, Mature and immature, spirit filled and carnal. The difference always has to do, not with what Christ has done, but with what we are doing.

“I need you to tell me if she is a christian” – no one can do that – we must wait to see if fruit is borne

Second, we do not look like we think we ought to look. We still have indwelling sin. The remnants of sin remain and that frustrates us and brings out our **gate fever**.

Gate fever is the fear of freedom, we begin to need the prison, and are afraid to function without the rules, something to tell us we are doing right.

Colossians 2:16-20 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. 20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:

A. What do these false standards look like?

We see these standards and rules all around us. They take on various forms, but they serve one purpose: to prop up and finish the work of Jesus.

New rules and legalisms – declaring out of bounds things that God has created and named good. In reformed groups this looks like new parties, the truly reformed, the theonomists, those who do courtship instead of dating, classical schooling, home schooling, classical home schooling.

Perverting God’s rules – Sabbaths, taking things that should be delights and making them rigid ways of gaining God’s approval

Bible memorization, study, evangelism, prayer

What should these things be? Pipes by which we get the water of life. Instead they become dams to the living water.

Looking for other helpers/mediators – reverence of angels and fear of demons

Looking for greater experiences, a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit, visions, dreams etc.

B. What is wrong with them?

They are separate from Christ.

Colossians 2:19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

These rule keepers put their trust in themselves, in the strength of their own arms. They thank Christ for the start they give them, but intend to carry on by themselves. They talk little about the cross and Christ, because it is for beginners, the cross motivates them little, the cross has affected them little, and they have little of the cross.

They have relegated Christ to being their mascot, not the team

They are like living limbs which have been sewn onto a mannequin. They will wither and die, because they do not have the spirit.

They don't work

Colossians 2:23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Our sin problems are spiritual problems, and need the Holy Spirit to fix them. Our rule keeping simply will not do away with our problems.

We look at people who have lost their strength due to illness, and tell them to lift weights and get stronger. When we should be giving them antibiotics to kill the germs causing the weakness.

St Jerome, became a monk and went out to the desert to starve his sin. Dedicated his life to prayer, fasting, meditation and works of mercy – this is how he described it:

How often I imagined I was in the midst of the pleasure of Rome when I was stationed in the desert, in that solitary wasteland. I who because of the fear of hell had condemned myself to such a hell and who had nothing but scorpions and wild animals for company, often thought I was dancing in a chorus with girls. My face was pale with fasting, but my mind burned with passionate desires within my freezing body; and the furies of sex seethed, even though the flesh had already died in me as a man.

I found the same thing to be true in my experience. The harder I struggled to become the spiritual man, the more I saw of my sin, the more carnal I thought myself, and the worse I felt about myself. My sin, which should have driven me to the cross for grace and help, drove me from it, because my life did not match the picture, and I felt ashamed because of it.

Where does your sin drive you?

2. Jesus has done enough.

Colossians 2:9-15 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against

us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

We have been given fullness in Him, what does that mean. We are complete.

Circumcised, Baptized – we have been cleansed, the filth is taken off, he has made us presentable

made alive – we are no longer dead in sin, we see sin for what it is, we are not its slave anymore, we are no longer deceived by it

our debt is paid – our shame is over, we owe nothing, we do not need to live our lives trying to pay a debt that we never owed

our enemies are defeated – we need no special formulas for driving away demons, we need only remain in Christ who has defeated them.

The whole thing may best be summed up by saying we have been made children.

Romans 8:15-17 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.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

We are God’s children not his pets. My pets never make messes, stay where I put them, and do what they are told. My children constantly mess my house, never stay where I put them, and constantly rebel. The first time my dog snaps at my children she is gone. My children are mine forever and when I die all that I have will go to my children. Why? Because they are my children.

3. Three Conclusions from Christ’s Work.

A. Death to Sin does not look like you think.

What do you think death to sin looks like? Many of us think it looks like never being tempted, never struggling with sin. But in reality it means quite the opposite. Those who are dead in their sin are the ones who never struggle, they just sin, and feel no pain.

Why do alcoholics always say they can quit anytime? Because they haven’t felt the pain yet, they just drink.

Romans 7:21-23 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

B. Those who have not died to sin have no comfort in their salvation.

The fact that Christ’s work always is effective has another meaning. It means that if you show no tangible signs of having died to sin, then you are not in Christ. If anyone thinks they can be in Christ and continue to pursue sin with impunity, they have been deceived, and you need to know the truth.

1 Corinthians 5:11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

Ephesians 5:5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Watership Down: some rabbits thought they lived in the perfect place, plenty to eat, nothing to fear. And they never talked about one fact, every night one of their number would go missing. In fact a farmer was raising them to kill them. They were prisoners, but of their own choosing.

There is nothing you can do to save yourself. To prefer sin to Christ shows that you are dead in sin, you have no idea who Christ is, or what he has done. You have no idea what sin is, or what kind of personal rebellion you are involved in. You have no idea that you are a slave to one who will destroy you.

The amazing thing is that Christ's offer is still open. Don't sit and argue over whether you have been saved, come to Christ today, today is the day of salvation.

C. Those who have died to sin, should take great comfort in Christ's work for them.

Do you hate your sin, do you wish to be freed from it? Take comfort, you are in Christ, and get off your own backs.

So many of you continually beat yourselves up over what you aren't. It all comes from not believing Christ is enough.

I don't have enough faith – are you satisfied with Christ, that is faith

Repentance – what would it mean if you were?

Feelings – yes, that is one thing you need Christ for

I still sin – yes, I know, that is why you need Christ, our sin has drawn out God's pity, don't you remember he is a God who delights to show mercy.

Christ will do – after personal devotionals, family devotionals, community prayer meeting, and writing, he realized all that would not do, but Christ will do. Is that your watchword?