

November 8 Matthew 25:1-13

When we are brought to a saving faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit the Bible speaks of us as being 'born-again'. When that happens, we begin to change on the inside. This inner transformation changes the way we act. The way we think. The way we live out our daily lives. Our focus changes. We no longer focus on ourselves, our needs, our wants, or our desires. We focus on God and His will and purpose for us. This is what happens when the Holy Spirit takes over our lives.

J.B. Phillips said, "**Anyone who opens his personality to the living Spirit takes a risk of being considerably shaken.**"

We are meant to be shaken. We are meant to be different. Sadly, some people refuse to be different. They want all the benefits of having their sins forgiven. They want to enjoy all the blessings of being loved and cared for by God. They want the guarantee of a place in Heaven, but they don't want to be different. They don't want to die to sin and self and come alive to the new life in Christ. We want all of the benefits of the new life in Christ without giving up the old life of selfishness and sin.

In following Jesus there are changes that we must be willing to make in how we live our lives. There may be things in our lives that we enjoy that are against the will and purpose of God.

God calls us to be different. He calls us to be Holy. To be other. To be set apart. To be distinct. God calls us to honor and serve Him in every aspect of our lives. Not just for an hour or two on a Sunday when we meet together. We are meant to be different every moment of every day.

We are not yet what we might be.

We are not yet what God would have us to be.

We are not yet what we wish to be.

We are not yet what we hope to be.

But we thank God that we are not what we once were.

Are you willing to be different? Are you worried that others may consider you strange if you live as God expects you to live? Can we really be different? In our own strength we can't. But as God works in us and thru us, we can. We can be changed and transformed by the power of The Holy Spirit

God says to us, "Be holy, for I am holy." This can be a very intimidating statement. The issue with that is this: God is holy, and we are not. Perhaps part of our problem with this is that we put the emphasis on the wrong part of God's command. We focus on the "Be Holy" part, but the real power is in the "For I Am Holy" part. We cannot be holy without God's holiness. Our part is to be obedient to the voice of the Holy Spirit as He gives us direction. Our biggest failure, when it comes to holiness, is our disobedience to God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Holiness may seem out of reach. But when we allow the Holy Spirit complete control of our lives, we will see God's holiness. How can that be? This is how:

What God chooses, HE cleanses

What God cleanses, HE molds

What God molds, HE fills

What God Fills, HE uses.

These are Jesus' last words before His ascension into heaven as recorded in Acts 1:8, **"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

The word translated here as meaning power is the Greek word "Dunamis." Dunamis is used 120 times in the New Testament. It is a word that refers to "strength, power, or ability." Dunamis is not just any power. It refers to miraculous power or marvelous works. It also refers to "moral power and excellence of soul." It is the root word of our English words dynamite, dynamo and dynamic. We will be different when we allow God to empower us through the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to The Psalmist in Psalm 119:17-19, **"Be good to your servant, that I may live and obey your word. Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions. I am only a stranger in the land. Don't hide your commands from me!"**

The Psalmist acknowledges that he is a servant of God. He wants to live by obeying the words and commandments of God. The modern world would call the psalmist strange. Strange because He believes there is a God. Strange because He believes God is good. Strange because He believes in obeying the word of God. Strange because He believes the Word of God is truth.

The psalmist says, 'I am only a stranger in the land.' Like the psalmist if we dare to be different, if we truly live as servants of God some people will think we are strange. I openly confess that I know I am strange.

I love God, I trust God,

I believe the Bible is the Word of God,

I believe God speaks to me through His Word,

I believe Jesus is the only way, the only truth, the only life,

I believe the Holy Spirit empowers me,

I believe I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,

I believe God is with me and will not forsake me,

I believe He has a perfect plan for my life,

I believe I have been saved from my sins,

I believe I have a place secured for me in Heaven,

I believe that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor anything above or below will ever separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus,

I believe I am ransomed, healed, restored and forgiven,

I believe I am saved.

I am strange! I hope you are strange too! We are meant to be different from those around us.

Can you pray, **"Lord, give me the courage to live as a stranger on earth! Lord, open my eyes that I may see the wonderful truth in your word. Help me to obey your word."**

Dare to be strange. Dare to live differently. Be different from the world around you.

Throughout the Bible, we are given practical instructions on how to do this. In 1 Thessalonians 5, the Apostle Paul gives us very clear guidelines on how we are to live differently.

“You aren’t in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won’t be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night. So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clear headed. Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk. But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation. For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out His anger on us. Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when He returns, we can live with Him forever. So, encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.” I Thessalonians 5:4-11

Paul is encouraging the Thessalonians, and us, to dare to be different. Paul uses four metaphors to describe the differences that should be present in our lives.

NUMBER ONE: We are Light not darkness. The world is living in darkness. Darkness implies evil, ignorance and sin. How can we live differently? We live as ‘children of the light.’ Instead of running away from the darkness we shine through it. Jesus has shone His light into our lives. He has led us from darkness into His marvelous light. If you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you are a child of the light. You are light in this dark sin-sick world. You are a beacon for others that shines with the love of God. Light is a distinguishing characteristic of your life.

NUMBER TWO: We are Day not night. We are children of the day. We do not belong to the night. We know the day is coming when Christ will return. On that day those who are in Christ will rejoice. We have seen the light. We have been saved from eternal darkness. We have been rescued from death and Hell.

But there are those who choose to remain in the darkness. There are those who choose to remain away from God. When Christ returns it will be too late for them to be saved. Too late for them to repent. Too late for them to step from darkness into light. God has called you as a child of the light. As a child of the day to share the Gospel with those who are living in the darkness of night. Dare to be different. Dare to shine the light of God.

NUMBER THREE: WE ARE AWAKE AND NOT ASLEEP. Paul encourages us to not be like those who are asleep. Not to be like those who are unaware of the truth. We are no longer dead in our trespasses and sins. We are alive in Christ. We are to be active, not passive in our daily walk with our Lord. Don't allow yourself to go to sleep spiritually. Read His Word. Spend time in prayer. Serve Him. Love God and others. Be active. Be prepared for our Lord is coming. Be awake.

NUMBER FOUR: we are to be sober not drunk. This speaks of both a physical state and a spiritual reality. Drunkenness arises from a lack of self-control. It indulges the senses in order to escape reality. Read the papers. Watch the news. It seems for many people the only source of purpose and joy is excess. They only live for the moment. They ignore and forget about the consequences. If it feels good, they do it. They live for pleasure, comfort, and self-indulgence.

God expects something different from His children. We seek to be self-controlled in every area of our life. We live in the light. We are clearheaded. Protected by the armor of faith and love. Wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

Our lifestyle is totally different from what the world thinks is right. It reflects that we are more willing to love and serve God than seek meaningless pleasure for ourselves.

1 Thessalonians 5:14-22 reads, "**Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil.**"

You are a citizen of a different world. You are a stranger in a foreign land. You are meant to live differently. Dare to be strange and live differently! Today, ask God to help you to dare to be different. Thank Jesus that He died for you so that you can live for Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to avoid every kind of evil. Live a life of love, kindness, joy and peace. Dare to be strange and live differently for the glory and honor of God. We are here to display the glorious light of Christ in our lives. We are to be like a city on a hill. As we live for Christ, we find these following words written by Stephen R. Adams to be true:

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is peace;

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is love;

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is comfort in life's darkest hour,

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is light and life;

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is help and power.