

God has called us to be holy. His will for us is to walk in holiness. This is called sanctification. It means that we don't belong to the world. We belong to God. He has set us apart and claimed us as his own. He has called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light. He has baptized us into his Son Jesus Christ so that just as Christ was raised from the dead we would also live a new life.

Now, if we don't belong to the world, then we don't think like the world either. St. Paul says that we are being transformed by God through the renewal of our minds. He gives us new thoughts, which seek to please him. As the peace of God in Christ rules our hearts and minds, the Holy Spirit guides us to discern God's good, acceptable, and perfect will. A Christian therefore thinks differently from the way this world thinks. For example, a Christian forgives those who sin against him, because he knows that he is forgiven by Christ. A Christian doesn't see a job or a talent as simply a way to make money and pile up earthly possessions. Instead, the Christian knows that God generously provides all we need to support our body and life. A Christian has confidence that God has prepared for us our works to walk in as we strive to love the neighbors he puts in our lives. The Christian doesn't need to seek vengeance for himself, because he knows that vengeance belongs to God. God gives authority to governments and other institutions to punish evil and reward good, and when these things fail, the Christian still has confidence that Christ will come to judge the earth with righteousness and justice.

This is why St. Paul urges us to walk in this way of holiness. God himself brings it about. He wills our sanctification. He causes us to walk in his ways. In urging us to walk the way of holiness, St. Paul warns us against two things. First, he warns us against sexual sins. As he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Your body is not your own to treat with carnal lusts. You are not your own, but you are been bought with a price. Christ has purchased you with his own blood and innocence. So don't treat your body as a piece of meat. Don't be ruled by your own passions and lusts.

Second, he warns against cheating our brothers and sister in Christ. Don't use your fellow Christians as simply ways to make money. Instead, trust that God will bless the honest work he has called you to do. If that means that you end up getting defrauded, then that isn't the worst thing to happen. As Jesus says, "If someone sues you for your shirt, then let him have your coat too." After all, you know that God will avenge all these things. But God hasn't called you to live in these unclean ways. He has called you to be holy. He has called you to a heavenly inheritance, won for you by Christ. God gives you his own Holy Spirit as a guarantee.

Living in holiness is not just about following the rules. Much more, it's about thinking like a child of God. Through faith in Christ, you know God as your Father. The Holy Spirit therefore guides you to grow in this knowledge of God who called you to himself. Why do the people of the world treat marriage the way they do? Why do they fornicate, shack up, and act as if marriage is simply their own social contract? Why do they care more about successful careers, fame, and popularity than they do about humility, service, and the fear of God? It's because they follow the passions of their hearts. They are driven and controlled by their sinful lust. As Aladdin said to Jasmine, "Tell me, princess, now when did you last let your heart decide?" But the Christian confesses the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful beyond all measure and desperately wicked. Who can know it" (Jer 17:9)? As Christ himself teaches us, out of the heart comes every kind of sin.

St. Paul puts it simply. They don't know God. This is why they think in a completely worldly way. Their hope remains only in this life, without any certainty of salvation. Of course, this doesn't mean that they are animals. They are people created in God's image. Jesus died for them. And they are capable of

leading decent lives outwardly. They can recognize a sense of dignity for other human beings. They might even show you respect for how you live. But as long as they remain without Christ, they won't ever think the way you do. They remain blind to the mercy and wisdom of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So don't be surprised if you appear a bit weird to the people of the world. And don't be afraid to look strange to this world. After all, God has set you apart. You are an aroma of life to those who are being saved, but you are also an aroma of death to those who are perishing. By all means possible, live at peace with people. Don't needlessly start fights. But don't imagine that leading a holy life means that you never offend anyone. As the Apostle teaches us, "Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds, so that you may discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12:2). This means that you open your heart to people, but you don't trust your heart. You can listen to people with an open mind, but not so much that your brains fall out. Because your heart and your mind are not ruled by the winds of this age. You stand on the doctrine of Christ. His Word both comforts you and guides you. You live and move under Christ, guarded by his peace, which he won for you by the shedding of his own blood. So live in him, walk in him, and think in him. This is what it means to be holy. This is the will of God.

The Christian thinks this way, because the Christian knows God. Jesus says that his sheep know him, and he knows them. We know God, because he first knew us in Christ. He therefore called us to faith in Christ, and he keeps us in the faith.

This gets to the heart of why you as a Christian think the way you do. It all comes back to faith. You see, faith always clings to God's promise in Christ. We walk by faith and not by sight. This is the life we live. We live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself up for us. His crucifixion and resurrection, his mercy and forgiveness, his victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil remains the constant object and ground of your faith. This is true despite the sin that still clings to you. Despite the assaults of the devil who seeks to intimidate you and lead you to trust in the earthly things that are fading away, your faith feeds on Christ and his Word. Your faith lives in Christ, joined to him as a bride to her husband, resting always in his words of eternal life.

This is important for you to know, especially because you don't always feel this. If you are honest, then you will admit that you don't find anything good dwelling in your flesh. Your old, sinful nature is always striving against what the Holy Spirit gives you. You get deceived by the world's doctrines, like the pride of life and the lust of the eyes. But you need to know and be reminded that your faith, as dimly burning as it may seem, is always clinging to the words of God. It is always finding light in Christ, even when all you can see is sin and death. Because your faith comes from God's Word. You are born of this imperishable seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His own Spirit gives you a new birth and a new life through the washing of water with the Word. Your faith therefore thirsts for this Word of God as a newborn child thirsts for the milk of his mother.

This is the mind God gives you in Christ. Because the faith he has given you is always clinging to Christ and his Word of grace. To prove this, God often makes you go through trials. Whether you have to battle against your sin, resist the attacks of the devil and his demons, suffer persecution, or struggle to understand how God's Word applies to your life, God proves through it all that your faith clings to his Word and promise. It is in the heat of such trials and in the face of God's judgment when faith alone is shown to hold on to God's promise of peace.

Just consider the example of this Canaanite woman in our Gospel lesson. She is from the land of Tyre and Sidon, a place where the light of God's grace was rejected for thousands of years. It's where the false worship of Baal came and corrupted the hearts of the Israelites. It would not come as a surprise to any Israelite that this woman's daughter was possessed by a demon. Yet, here she is, crying out to Jesus for mercy. Here, in this dark place of unbelief and worldliness, is a woman calling Jesus the Lord and the Son of David. She knows him to be God's anointed one, the Savior who rescues us from sin and darkness.

Notice how this woman reacts when Jesus ignores her and his disciples are urging him to send her away. Her plea for mercy doesn't stop. It's obvious that she doesn't think the way others do. Her Lord's silence and the disciples' scorns don't stop her from seeking help from her Lord. And then, when he seems to reject her with his words, she still hangs on to what he says. He says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel," implying that he did not come for this worldly Canaanite woman. And yet, this only prompts her to bow down and worship him. It only drives her to ask all the more for help from her Lord.

This is because faith clings to the words of Jesus, even when they seem harsh. Faith finds God's promise, even when it is surrounded by condemnation. It's as if she hears Jesus' words, and her faith says, "Yes, he said he came only for lost sheep. If anyone is lost, then it's me." Because faith doesn't reason the way the world does. Faith simply hears the good news and clings to it. This is why faith brings forth fruit of love and hope and patience and peace. It's because it lives and feeds of the words and promise of Christ the Savior. He came for lost sheep. I am a lost sheep. He therefore came for me.

So notice how this woman never disagrees with anything Jesus says. She hangs on his every word, even when they reveal her sin and worldliness. Jesus says, "It isn't good to take the children's bread and throw it to the puppies." He called her a dog. I have seen people run away with anger and weeping over much less. But this woman agrees with her Lord's words.

How? How can she possibly endure such harsh treatment? Only by faith. It is only because her faith clings to the words of her Savior. Her faith hears that her Lord gives bread. He gives living bread. He gives himself up for the sins of the world, and his flesh and blood wounded on the cross gives life to all those who sit in the shadow of death. So she catches Christ in his words. Yes, Lord. You're right, Lord. Amen, Lord. These are the words of faith. "Even the puppies eat some of the crumbs that drop from their masters' table."

Jesus recognized this woman's faith for what it was. He is, after all, the author and finisher of faith. He is the object of faith, the reward of faith, the meat and drink of faith. This woman's daughter was healed, released from the demon's control. Why? Because of what faith always clings to. It was because of Christ, who seeks and saves the lost.

This account of the Canaanite woman's faith is written to encourage you and remind you of what your faith is in. Your faith clings to Christ, to his suffering and death, to his resurrection. It feeds on his Word and finds every blessing of forgiveness, life, and salvation in his promise. This is why you live the way you do. God has called you to this Christian life. He has set you apart. And you can be confident that he will work all things out for you. Even if you have to walk with a limp your whole life like Jacob did, even if your labors and your tears seem to be ignored, you can be confident that God has called you to be his own. He has set you apart by the holiness and purity of his Son's blood and righteousness. So hold onto him. Hold him to his promise. It will shape the way you live and think. And God will bless you. Amen.