

Five Rules for Christian Living - Part 1

by A.W. Tozer

To live a life of Christian living, we must venerate all created things, honor all men, love all Christians, fear God, and honor the king.

Duration: 30:38

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 9:10, Revelation 1:13

Topics: "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of five rules for believers. The first rule is to have a reverent attitude towards all created things, as they are seen as the garments of God. The preacher also highlights the significance of the presence of the law in organizing society and ensuring safety. The sermon then shifts to discussing the fear of God, distinguishing between a holy fear and a fear of punishment. The preacher emphasizes the need for genuine love and good will towards others, stating that it keeps Christians on the right track and leads to positive outcomes. The sermon concludes by discussing the concept of drawing near to God, emphasizing the desire for believers to be closer to Him.

Transcript

There was a time in the development of the Church of Christ on Earth when the saints spoke very much of what they called rules for holy living and their majors were said to have accrued to those who adhered to these rules. They were not always the same. Each Christian worked out his rules for himself and many holy souls there have been who have left us in their writings, particularly in their autobiographies, rules which they followed.

Now I have been dealing with that now these two Sundays. Last week I presented to you a set of five rules to govern our attitude toward five basic relations on Earth. I only got as far as the first two and I promised that I would finish now.

God has mercifully permitted me to live this week out and to begin to leave these rules. I said that we were to do five things. First, our attitude toward all created things.

That we were to venerate because they are the flowing garments of the deity. God cannot be seen with the naked eye, so God bathes himself in his creation and walks forth and rides forth upon the wings of the wind and with the garments trailing, we call those trailing garments nature, his creation. Then our attitude toward all men.

We are to honor them because they are made in the image of God. I think not too much emphasis can ever be placed upon the doctrine of the divine image just as you can have an inspired Bible as originally given that are so inaccurate and unscholarly and confused that they give but an imperfect of the perfection of the original. So we because of sin, personal sin, of nature and of conduct and our sin in Adam, grotesque, badly distorted and imperfect of what must have been meant by the original image of God.

But for the sake of that image, we are to honor all men. Then the next is all Christians. Our attitude toward to love them because they are children of God.

Our attitude toward God, fourthly, we are to fear him in that he is the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, the ages of days throughout all life. And then since we are here on earth, we are for the time being within the framework of human government and therefore we have certain attitudes that we must make for constituted authority called the king here. And that is we are to honor them because they are children of God.

Now the first two I dealt with, venerate all created things and honor all men. Now we come to hood, that is the brotherhood of the redeemed Christians. This cannot mean, cannot possibly mean, love the people of your renomination.

Thus to interpret it is to violate it. It cannot mean love the members of your church. That is, it does mean that, but it cannot possibly mean that.

And it does not certainly mean love the group that holds with you ensemble Christians. Such as baptism or interpretation. It means love the brotherhood of the redeemed.

It means love the born-again brother who wears a hijab on a hot day and preaches in it. It means love the man who is a careful ad-date in Holy Week, even though we of the more liberal interpretation of things smile at it. Friday is good Friday and every Sunday is Easter.

But he is in the brotherhood and therefore we are to love him. It means every Christian, wherever there is a scrap of evidence that he is a Christian indeed. And our attitude therefore is expressed in these two words, really one word, love, love them.

But I am forced to say here that that word love may mean a score of things, and it does mean a score of things, depending upon who uses it and the association in which it is found. The chameleon word, it changes its color with the association. Wherever it is, it takes on the person who uses it.

And here it means, this is full of goodwill, and it means more, but we'll start there. Love means to hold toward them an attitude of complete goodwill, always and only their highest welfare. Now that is a kind of love, it's a principle of goodwill.

I think that's too well known to need repeating. But this principle of goodwill is a strong thing, and it's a determining thing. And it's like a set of sticks that keeps the Christian on the track, the right track with regard to his brethren.

And it means, as he is on that track and is loving the brotherhood, he cannot possibly wish to end anything but good. And then it means more than that. If we make love only good, then we rob it of all its enjoyable qualities.

Because love is more than a measure of heat as well, a heat that desires to be nearer its object. For instance, the scripture says, Me and I will draw nigh to you. Why is God's angels draw nigh? Obviously because he wants us near him, and we're always being exhorted to come to him, to live with him, to stay by him, to be where he is, and to let him be where we are.

And why did God go looking for Adam in the cool of the day, back yonder in the tragic circumstances that surrounded the fall? It was because God wanted to be where Adam is. And love may be detected by the fact that it desires to be nearer its object. And if it does not desire to be near its object, then it may be some kind of an ethical principle, a negative ethical principle, which does not do any harm.

But it is not love in the biblical sense of the term. And then it is an emotional heat over applause and weaknesses. Even God says that he knows our frame, and he remembers that we are.

There may be honor of the saint. I say there may be honor of the saint somewhere. No, I won't even go that far.

But it's conceivable that we could imagine there being somewhere honor of the saint that could walk straight into the presence of God and him without embarrassment and know that God saw no fault in him. But I have never met one, and if ever I met one who said it was true of him, I would know that I hadn't met one. We would have never seen one, never heard of him.

The saint Augustine and all of the rest knew that their right to fellowship the most holy God was blood of Jesus, and it was only through the blood of the everlasting covenant that they dared enter and that they fell. So that God is forced to overlook certain flaws in us. He's bound to do it, otherwise he'd have no friends among us.

Even Abraham, his friend, he had to overlook flaws and weaknesses in that friend so that love will overlook it. No homely daughter was ever known to be homely by her mother or her father because love covers up homeliness. No woman ever yet married a homely man, and no man ever yet married a homely woman.

Strangely enough, there are lots of homely men and women who are married. The reason is that the emotional glow that came upon them completely hid from each other what everybody else knew. Now, he never yet saw anybody that didn't look good to him.

He never looked on a face that wasn't sweet. He never heard a voice that wasn't sweet. Never, because God's great, blazing heat of love disguises the harshness and the homeliness of our faces and the flaws of our characters, and hides them from himself, knowing he, by grace and through the blood of the Lamb, is in process, or they are in process, of perfection.

There will be a day at them, unembarrassed, when they look in his face, unembarrassed, and his nature will be on their foreheads, and they will die as the angels. But that time is not now. We can fellowship with God as the angels, but always God must act as we are, but thus.

And love always does that. And extending that now to the brethren, love overlooks flaws and blemishes in our brethren, in those who are true Christian brethren. And then, love also is an emotional heat that will lead to sacrifice on the part of the one who feels it, for the person that they love.

Sacrifice and suffer we have, we need, more than the cross or even before the cross, when our Lord Jesus Christ, for the joys of the world, and for the completion of the work that he had come to do, allowed himself to be mistreated and maligned and cursed. He suffered, not that he had to do it, but he suffered. I remember hearing a great preacher, never to touch American shores, when he was going in the days of his great preaching, Paul Rader.

I remember his preaching on the text, into the slaughter. He took that verb, brought, and said, what brought him? Speedily over the powers of earth and things that could bring and compel, and showed that none of them could have brought him. And then said, what brought him? And answered it, love brought him.

And nothing else could bring him. Love brought him out of where they constrained him, couldn't resist and didn't want to resist. And so love will lead people to do what everybody else in the wide world will lead them to do.

And then continue to do it, and want to do it, and wonder why they want to do it. And then it will go so far as to give its life for its object. It would be a cliché for me to remind you that there are tens of thousands of mothers who have given their lives for their children.

And not only mothers, but fathers too. And Jesus, we were friends, who laid down his life for his brethren. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Now the attitude we are to take toward our Christian brethren, we are to hold it toward them all the time. It's never to be varied. And it's a love that is impossible to feel toward the person out of Christ.

Because it is a love given particularly to God's children. Because they are God's children. He that loveth him, let beget love also unto him.

Now, the next is fear God. Plumished reverence of which the great favor writes, and it may grade up from its basic element the terror of the guilty soul before a holy God. It may grade up from there to the rapture of the worshiping saint.

I don't want to be dealing in suppositives altogether. I doubt whether up until I was well on into my ministry I ever moderated or put in anywhere a qualifying phrase. Everything was emphatically what it was without qualifying.

But I have long learned that that isn't a wise way to look at the world or anything else for that matter. And there are very few but I'd like to say that I believe that I can that the reverential fear of God mixed with love and fascination and admiration and devotion is the most enjoyable thing and the most ocean a human soul can know. Without it I could not exist as a true Christian.

I guess there are persons who without it are strong enough simply to live by ethics. I remember Benjamin Franklin. Just an old Christian tall, never was.

Whitfield prayed for him and told him he was praying for him but he said I guess it did no good because that was when he wrote his autobiography. But Benjamin Franklin drew what we call now a graph or a chart square and many little squares and on those little squares he wrote virtues, honesty, faithfulness, charity. And I guess there were a dozen or maybe 25 of these virtues as I remember his chart.

And he had a calendar somehow or other and when he would violate one of these virtues he'd write that down and he had gone a day or a month or a year without having broken any of his self-imposed commandments why then he considered he had no spiritual experience, no sense of the divine, no mystic overtone, no worship, no fear of God before his eyes according to his own testimony and yet he lived like that. All I can say is because I don't belong to that breed of man I can only keep right by keeping the fear of God on my soul and the fascinated rapture of worship. Apart from that I don't know any rules at all.

Now it may seem great that trembling and hiding of the guilty man to the ecstasy of the saint but this God is a missing quality in the church today and its absence is a foretaste and a sign and there are those who are trying very desperately bad to reintroduce the fear of God into the church and they're doing it by threatening men and by pointing to physical dangers that assail us. May I repeat what I think I must have said that the fear of God never can be the fear of danger but the fear of God can never be induced by threats of punishment. It is told to induce the biblical fear of God by threatening a man.

You can scare a man white and make him do right any thief will behave in the presence of the policeman but the fear of God is all together. There is also a remote ancient relation with the fear that comes as a threat of danger.

You see my friend great many are they spring up out of fear of punishment and as soon as the danger of repentance is removed along with it as the old Omar Khayyam said somewhere that he repented many times but when spring came rose in hand he tore his garments of repentance and so when I swore that I would obey God in an hour of fear or in the threat of danger the apprehension of punishment it's one thing to be morally afraid that's one thing nothing else to know because it doesn't mean that they're not scared it's not accusing them of being cowards or is he saying that they are so brave that they have no fear he is saying there is no fear of God before their eyes there may be fear of death there may even be fear of hell but that's not the fear of God it's the breathless adoration the

awesome fascination the lofty admiration the senseless breathless silence when we know that God is near that's the fear of God and it hovers like the cloud over Israel it lies upon us like a sweet invisible mantle it conditions our life it gives meaning to every text of scripture it makes every Sunday and every Wednesday and every Monday a holy day it makes every spot of ground a holy ground the fear of God but this is what we do not have today there is a great deal of preaching that is fulcrum to get leverage on man using the fear of communism or the fear of civilization or the fear of invasion from some other planet by the mysterious saucers this fear is upon man and it is upon man and Jesus even said men's hearts shall be failing them because of their coming on the earth but that's not

fear of God the fear of God is a spiritual thing and can only be brought by the presence when the Holy Ghost came at Pentecost there was great fear upon all people yet they weren't afraid of anything the child that is made perfect in love has no fear the perfect love casts out fear and yet he is the man of all men who most fear for the fear of God is not to be afraid of God it is to be so aroused that we bite our tongues and we say silence becometh my soul before thee oh God my helper now this accompanies a person so far as I know John wasn't much afraid when he ran away from Jesus when he was arrested he was scared and ran he was afraid of getting chucked into jail or maybe crucified so he ran away that was the fear of punishment the fear of danger but when he saw a man standing with a

white robe girded around the breast with a golden garland and with feet like under burnished brass and with a sword proceeding from his mouth and his hair snow and his face shining like the sun in his strength

the awe and reverence and fascination concentrated in his life so completely that it knocked him unconscious and this man of the most high God whom he later found was Jesus Christ who had the keys of death and hell he had to come and lift him up and bring a life back into him and the fear of punishment was threatening it was another kind of fear it was godly fear it was a holy thing and this is what's missing in our terrible day and brethren you can't superinduce it either by dressing in statues and talking in a language nobody else understands except the preacher you can't induce

it with organ music and light candles you can't induce it with a biscuit and claiming it's God you can't induce it by any amount of mumbo jumbo feel in the presence of this kind of paganism is not the true fear of God it's a superstition the sons and daughters of Baal felt the same way about Baal brethren the fear of God for it is worship it is love nourishment it is a high moral happiness that God exists it is so great that the soul feels that if God were not it would cease to be it could easily pray oh my God as thou art or let me die it could easily pray oh my God continue to be the God thou art or annihilate and hopelessly in love with the person of God the transfer of affection could never even remotely that's the fear of God missing in our terrible day and because it's missing we're

sewing up the veil of the temple again officially trying artificially to induce some kind of worship and to get people scared we threaten them with bombs and flying saucers I think the devil in hell must laugh God must grieve for there's no fear of God before the right lastly honor the king and here's the reason for everything appears see everything is so well laid out in the kingdom of God every little plot of ground like a beautifully laid out garden it's not a wilderness but a beautiful garden it is seen here that we venerate all things because they are God's creation we honor they were made in God's image we love all Christians because they are God's children and we are in the time make us love Christians and we fear God just because God is God we honor the king I thought maybe the

word honor all men but I find in the Greek the same word honor all men honor the king how can it be that we are told to honor all men that would include the king therefore why waste words the answer is that there are two different degrees and kinds of honor honor or something there is some reason and the honor we give to men is given to them for the cause that they are men the honor of kings those in authority is an honor that's bestowed on them for the reason that they are rulers in a God ordained kingdom so it's two different kinds of honor it's honored on a different level we give a king two honors by a king of course I do not mean a king called by that name I mean any appointed, elected or otherwise constituted we honor a king first as a man we honor President Eisenhower you can't

look at his smiling picture without loving the man we honor him because he's a man God made Eisenhower I think he did a good job of it but he made him and he made his brothers and he made his parents he made Eisenhower we honor Eisenhower because he's a man the degree of honor we give him and that's the highest degree and in the long run that's the last honor and the highest honor we can give him because he is in the framework of constituted society ordained of God because he is our not ruler chief executive we honor him as such so kings are honored not because they intrinsically have anything any other person doesn't have the little housewife lovely little woman we honor the queen but any mother in the wide world of any skin color we honor also because she happens to be head of a great

commonwealth so she gets two honors woman, we honor her as queen we honor Governor Stratton as a man among men we honor him as a governor over us so we honor constituted authority because God ordained it to be so I don't think there's much else to say there we have it these are the five rules and they're not a yoke on our neck nor ours they are the kind words of God telling us how we are to live toward

creation venerate men honor toward God fear toward our Christian brethren honor toward established government honor that eventuates in obedience that if we trusted God almighty and the power of the unmoving Holy Ghost to fulfill this image of Christianity in the 20th century such as hasn't been signed isn't it worth our praying then and yielding and surrendering isn't it worth our asking

God at any cost that the soul be entombed with his universe that the raindrop or the trembling leaf or the cry of the bird thrills us with a veneration for all God's world that the sound of a human voice though speaking a languid one thrills us with the thought here's a man once made in God's image the sight of the Christian face for their heart in harmony with us with the thought here is one born of the Father by our own kin in the presence of the law reminds us of the goodness of God in organizing society for us together so our houses are safe and we can walk the streets with a relatively high degree of safety Amen May God help us to live by these five rules

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