

Five Rules for Christian Living - Part 2

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer outlines five rules for Christian living, emphasizing the importance of veneration, honor, love, fear, and obedience to God and constituted authority.

Duration: 30:35

Scripture: Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 9:10, Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:18, Hebrews 12:28-29, Revelation 1:17

Topics: "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a holy fear and reverence for God. He explains that this kind of fear cannot be induced by external factors like fancy clothing, music, or rituals. Instead, it is a deep awe and respect that comes from recognizing God's power and glory. The preacher also discusses the concept of holy living and the rules that Christians have historically followed to guide their behavior. He highlights the need to honor all of God's creation and to recognize the divine image in every person.

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 leaders 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 them, 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 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, but the relations that are so inaccurate and unscholarly and confused that they give but an imperfect conception 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 in what must have been meant by the original image of God. But for the sake of that image, we are all men. Then the next is all Christians.

Our attitude toward them is 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 to everlasting life. And then, since we are here on earth, we are for the time being within the framework of human government, therefore we have certain attitudes that we must make toward a 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 brotherhood, 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 on some question, such as baptism or interpretation. It means love the brotherhood of the redeemed.

It means love the born-again brother who wears him on hot days and preaches him. It means love the man who is a careful addict in Holy Week, even though we of the more liberal interpretation of things smile at it every Friday's Good Friday and every Sunday's Easter. But he's in the brotherhood, and therefore we're to love him.

It means love 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.

It's a chameleon word. It changes its color with the association. Wherever it is, it takes on the form of the persons who use it.

And here it means the principle of goodwill, and it means more, but we'll start there. Love also means to hold towards them an attitude of complete goodwill, giving always and only their highest welfare. Now that is a kind of love, that's all there is to it, but 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. It keeps the Christian on the track, the right track, with the regard to his brotherhood.

And it means as he is on that track, and is loving the brotherhood, he cannot possibly wish to anything but good. And then it means more than that. If we make love only, then we rob it of all its enjoyable qualities, because love is more than a notion 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 saying to us, 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 near it. 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, but it is not love in the biblical sense of the term. And then it is an emotional heat over flaws and weaknesses.

Even God says that he knows our frame, and he remembers that we are. There may be honor at the saint. I say there may be honor at the saint somewhere.

No, I won't even go that far. But it's conceivable that we could imagine there being somewhere honor at 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. 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. And 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 of our feelings, the holiness 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, and they will look in his face, unembarrassed, and his nature will be on their foreheads, and they will follow him 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 does.

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, and we have, we need back them the cross, or even before the cross, when our Lord Jesus Christ, for the joy that was his, 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, even to the slaughter. He took that verb, brought, and said, what brought him? He preached speedily over the powers of earth and things that could bring and compel, and showed that none of them could have brought. And then said, what brought him? And answered it, love brought him.

And nothing else could bring him. Love brought him where they constrained him, couldn't resist and didn't want to resist. And so love will lead people, and everything 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're lost. 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 he 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. For it is a love given particularly to God's children, because they are God's children. He that loveth him that beget love also from him.

Now the next is fear God. Astonished 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 superlatives 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 qualifiers.

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 on the planet. 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 long a Christian. I guess there are persons who without it are strong enough simply to live by ethics. I remember Benjamin Franklin.

Christian, though Christian tall, never was. Whitfield prayed for him. He 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. 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 they're in the square. He had gone a day or a month or a year without having broken any of his self-imposed commandments.

Now, 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 Morya Ban, 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 wounds at all. Now, in Maine, I see great 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. 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 somewhere back down the weeks as we dealt with all this? May I repeat 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 to make him do right. Any thief will behave in the presence of the policeman.

But the fear of God is a thing altogether. It has absolutely no relation, or if so, 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 punishment is removed along with it, as old Omar Khayyam said somewhere, that he repented so 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 the fear of God.

When the Bible says there's no fear of God before their eyes, 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's no fear of God before their eyes. There may be fear of punishment, 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 of the attributes of God, 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 emotional 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.

Fear of God. But this is what we do not have today. There's 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 fear coming on the earth. But that's not fear of God.

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 because 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, O 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 and girded round the breast with a golden garland and with feet like under burnished brass and with a sword proceeding from his mouth and his hair as 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 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.

John might have lain there, maybe died there, out of shock. And yet he wasn't afraid. He wasn't afraid in the sense that he feared punishment which threatened him.

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. Brethren, you can't superinduce it either by dressing statues and talking in a language nobody else understands except the preacher. You can't induce it by soft organ music and light streaming through artistically designed windows.

You can't induce it by biscuit and claiming it's God. You can't induce it by any amount of mumbo-jumbo. To 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 is a beautiful thing.

For it is worship. It is love. ...generation. 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, O my God, as thou art, or let me die. It could easily pray, O my God, continue to be the God thou art, or annihilate.

Can't think of any other God but thee. It is to be so personally and hopelessly in love with the person of God that transfer of affection could never even remotely exist in the human mind. 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, artificially, trying artificially to induce some kind of worship. And to get people scared, we threaten them with ammo 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 is like a beautifully laid out garden. No, 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. Now I must talk a minute on that and close.

What does it mean to honor the king? I thought maybe the word honor all men and honor the king, but I find in the Greek that it's 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, you see. There is some reason back of honor.

Honor is bestowed, not arbitrary laws. 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-loved nation.

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 authority. 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, all right? We honor Eisenhower because he's a man. That's the highest 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 with the two pretty kids there in England, we honor the queen.

But any mother in the wide world of any skin color, we honor also. Elizabeth, because she happens to be head of a great commonwealth. So she gets two honors.

A woman, we honor her as a 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. They're ours. They are the kind words of God telling us how we are to live.

Toward creation, veneration of men, honor. Toward God, fear. Toward our Christian brethren, 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 in us, we, 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 in tune 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 language we don't understand, thrills us with the thought, here's a man once made in God's image. The sight of a Christian face for there are in all of us with the thought, here is one born of the Father, my own kin. 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.

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