

Fearing the Lord and Walking in Darkness

by Charles Finney

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's goodness and wisdom, even in times of darkness and uncertainty, and encourages believers to hold fast to their faith and confidence in God.

Scripture: Job 23:8, Isaiah 50:10

Topics: "Faith in Trials", "Trusting God in Darkness"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the importance of fearing the Lord and trusting Him even when one walks in darkness. He explains that this darkness is not a result of disobedience or guilt, but rather a period of spiritual trial where God's presence feels absent. Finney encourages believers to maintain a filial fear of God, which fosters obedience, and to trust in His goodness and wisdom despite their circumstances. He illustrates this with the examples of Job and Abraham, who exemplified unwavering faith in the face of profound darkness, ultimately leading to divine manifestation and growth in their faith.

Transcript

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Isaiah 50:10.

In discoursing from these words I shall show:

I. WHAT THE DARKNESS SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT IS.

II. WHAT SORT OF FEAR IS HERE MEANT, "WHO FEARETH THE LORD, &c."

III. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE EXHORTATION "LET HIM TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS GOD."

IV. WHY PERSONS UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE TEXT, SHOULD TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS GOD."

I. What darkness is here meant.

1. Not the darkness of nature, or of an unconverted state. This is evident from the fact that it is in the text itself spoken of as being consistent with obedience. "Who is he that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant?" Who does this, and yet "walketh in darkness?" It cannot be the darkness produced

by guilt and condemnation.

2. Nor is it the darkness of a state in which the soul is under condemnation and guilt, for the same reason as before. The Prophet describes the state as that of obedience. But condemnation can come only from disobedience. It is not therefore a darkness produced by guilt and condemnation.

3. It is not the darkness spoken of by John, in his first epistle (Ch. 1. 6.) "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." This is the darkness of unbelief, or of an unconverted state--the darkness of sin and disobedience; whereas the darkness which the prophet speaks of is entirely consistent with obedience, and existing at the same time with obedience and the fear of the Lord. But,

4. The darkness in the text does result from the absence of special divine manifestations to the soul. An illustration of the condition described by the prophet may be found in the circumstances of Job, (23:8, and onward). "Behold" says Job, "I go forward, but he is not there; and backward but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Observe, Job was in great darkness, he could not comprehend the dealings of God with him, he was in agony, he was struggling with his calamities; he could not find God to know the reason of the sore trials heaped upon him. Yet his obedience was constant and he held fast his integrity, and his confidence in God. He could declare he had not gone back from his commandment, and that he did esteem the words of his mouth more than his necessary food. He was in a state of obedience and integrity; yet in a state of darkness. There was an absence of the divine manifestation. He was searching after God, feeling after him on every side, looking where he worked, but no divine manifestation was vouchsafed. God hid himself in thick darkness, and Job could not find out his way. Yet Job was holding fast to his integrity and to his confidence. "When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold," are his words. He was in a state of obedience. Now this same thing often occurs to Christians. They are often in great trials and under powerful temptations. They have, sometimes great inward struggles against temptation, and these are accompanied with great outward difficulties. And Providence itself seems to be all against them. All their prospects darken, their way is shut up before them, their sky is covered with clouds, their undertakings fail, and their expectations mock them, and at the same time comes the withdrawal of the light of God's face, which before had shined upon them. They are left in darkness. This apprehension by our minds of the withholding of the special divine manifestation, the absence of divine presence, while we still hold fast to our integrity, is the darkness of the text.

II. What the "fear" of the text is.

It is not a slavish fear, nor a legal fear, for it is accompanied by obedience. But it is a filial fear--a fear to offend and displease God, proceeding from love to him, the fear of love and veneration such as affectionate children have for their beloved parents. That state of mind which good children have toward parents whom they greatly love and venerate, is which they cleave affectionately to obedience, and cannot endure the thought of offending, and bring upon themselves merited displeasure. You know how keenly good children feel the frown of a kind parent. If a cloud gathers upon his countenance, they are agonized, they cannot bear the sight, and must inquire beseechingly, "Dear Father are you displeased with us?" They have the greatest dread of the displeasure of their parents. So the child of God, fears to

offend his Heavenly Father--to know that he is displeased is the greatest torment and he fears above all things to sin against him. This is the "fear" of the text.

III. What is implied in the exhortation--"Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

1. A confidence in the goodness of God, in the goodness of his character. This is not at all strange, is it? You can conceive how such a confidence can consist with the darkness already described. A child might be under the hidings of his father's face, in the absence of his smile, and yet be able to say "I know my father, I know there is some good reason for him to do as he does." And in it all, he might confide in his Parent's goodness in general, and kindness towards him in particular.

It is well for the child to be able, when any thing mysterious in his parent's conduct takes place, thus to confide, and if the matter is for the time inexplicable, to be able to say, I have unwavering confidence,--I know He does all things well. Such a trustful spirit will sustain his soul in his obedience, and preserve that love without which obedience is no obedience. If you lose your confidence in the goodness and the holiness of God, your obedience is no longer the obedience of love.

2. An exhortation to confide in the wisdom of God--not only in his benevolence and truthfulness, but in his wisdom also. It is an exhortation to lay hold of the promises, to lay hold of all that is said in the Bible, of his moral character, in application to all cases wherein his conduct is to us unexplained or inexplicable, and to rest assured that in respect to what he does to us in particular, he is good and wise and that even the darkness in which we are left, is among the 'all things' that work together for our own good. While we search in vain, and fail to find God--when he hides his way in a great deep, we are to trust his wisdom and love, and expect Him to bring us forth at length into the light. 'He knoweth the way that I take' says Job, 'when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'

In all that God does, we are to believe that he does it for our good, as he says he does, to feel that what God does is well done, and in all places, even in the midst of the deepest darkness, to repose the soul in unwavering faith in the glorious perfection of his wisdom and power and love. But I come now to show,

IV. Why we should thus trust in the Lord. Why we should acquiesce in all God's dealings, and believe that all is for the best.

1. Because this darkness is designed, on God's part, to develop and strengthen our faith. Observe, the darkness is not that of unbelief and worldly-mindedness, but it is consistent with obedience to God. In all such cases, it is designed by God for our good, we may be sure that it is designed to develop and strengthen our faith and confidence in God. He thereby gives us occasion to try the reality and genuineness of our trust and the firmness of our faith, and occasion to strengthen it by exercise, and unless we believe God, and hold fast our integrity as Job did, and say with him, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him" we defeat the great end for which these seasons are suffered to come upon us. Job's darkness was of ultimate benefit to him, and glorified God in many ways. After he had gone through the trials, and come out safe, after he had held fast to his assurance of God's love and mercy and goodness and had been confirmed in that assurance by the event, answering fully his expectation--did this not teach him to trust God in the future? And could he not more firmly if possible resist afterwards every attack of the adversary? Surely he could. Before, he knew God was holy and good, and now he has the additional witness of his own most solemn and protracted experience on the point, to wit, the goodness of the Most High.

2. We should trust thus in darkness, because such confidence is highly honorable to God, more honorable to God than faith in other circumstances. Job's confidence, how honorable to God it was. How confounding to Satan! Satan pretended that Job served God for gain, and insinuated with a malicious impudence that if God should bring adversity upon him, Job would forsake him forthwith. "Doth Job fear God for nought? * * * But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.'

And after he had failed at first, his malice and hateful suspicion are not yet silenced, he said again, "Touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." And the Lord let Satan try Job to the utmost of his malice. He let him prove Job to his hearts content. And Satan found out to his confusion, that Job was proof against all his attacks. God let Satan and the universe know most unequivocally that Job's religion did not consist in a selfish love for temporal prosperity, that the root of the matter lay deeper than this in Job, that his piety did not spring from riches, and could flourish not alone in the sun-shine.

When Job maintained his integrity under the most dreadful attacks of Satan--the destruction of his worldly possessions, the ultimate death of his children, and last, the excruciating disease with which his body was smitten; when he stood firm, though his friends turned against him, and denounced him as a wicked hypocrite, when they refused to sympathize with and comfort him; when he held fast, though his own wife urged him to give up his confidence, and, his piety, and gave to him the awful advice, "Curse God and die;" when to this infamous advice, he gave the stern and impassioned rebuke, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh.

What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" When Job thus clung to his trust in God, what a testimony did he give to the goodness and faithfulness of Jehovah! When did Job honor God more than here? When if I may speak, was God so proud of him? Methinks I hear him say to Satan, "Satan, what do you think of Job now? You said that he was selfish, and that take away his wealth, he would curse me to my face. But now see! You have stripped him of his wealth in a day, have slain his children, smitten him with sore boils from head to foot, and made him a loathing to himself, his friends and even his wife turn against him--and what does he say?

"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." This is what he says instead of the curse you predicted.["] And what does he reply to his wife? Methinks if God ever smiled in complacency, it was then, to hear Job's earnest reply, '["]Thou talkest as one of the foolish women talketh. Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" When persons under outward discouragements or inward trials, plunged into the darkness of a mysteriously afflictive Providence, still maintain their integrity, and retain their confidence in God, how much in so doing, do they honor Him!

Many seem to suppose that they honor God most when their cup runs over with praise at the revelation of himself to them, when their face glows with the glory of the divine manifestation. This is lovely, indeed, and desirable, and we ought to rejoice when God thus vouchsafes his presence in glorious beauty to the soul. But we do not so highly honor God by such rejoicing as we do when we can say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." When we can say, "I cannot give an account of God's dealings with me.

I cannot tell why he afflicts me thus, but this I know, God is infinitely wise and supremely good, and all things, even these light afflictions, and this darkness will work together for my good, and for his glory." When we manifest this trust in God, we do honor to his faithfulness and goodness in a high degree.

3. Unbelief in such circumstances is highly dishonorable to God, and therefore persons when in darkness should trust in the Lord, and stay upon their God. What! must you have all the time the favoring gales of prosperity fill your canvass, and the gay sun-shine continually dancing on the waves beside your bark? Must you be thus, or will you be taken aback and begin to doubt whether God loves you at all? How dishonorable! Will you persist in judging the Lord by feeble sense, and still refuse to trust him for his grace?

How disgraceful is such conduct towards your Almighty sovereign and friend! A fact occurs to me related by Krummacher in his "History of Elisha." It is that of Johannes a Bruce the founder of the order of the Carmelites, who though a Romish friar was yet a saint indeed, a man distinguished for his ardent love for the Lord, and for his child-like confidence in the word of God, and his unshaken faith in the letter of the promises of Scripture. The convent of which he was prior was poor, and depended on charity.

Hence the fraternity were often destitute, "and the days did not infrequently occur" as our author beautifully expresses it, "when they were compelled to console themselves with the passage that "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." A day of this kind again occurred, and our hungry brethren on assembling for dinner found that the whole stock of food in their possession amounted to a piece of dry bread. This therefore they sat down to partake of, imploring the Divine blessing there-upon.

But as they were about to dispatch their crust, Johannes, their prior, arose and poured from his lips such "words of encouragement and consolation concerning the love of God in Christ, and the great promises He has given His people that all of them rose up delighted and refreshed, and without partaking of their bread returned to their cells." They had scarcely reached their silent retreats, when the bell rang at the gate, and on being opened, a man entered with a large covered basket in his hand, and a letter to Johannes, the prior.

The porter carried the letter to the prior, whom he found on his knees in prayer. He rose to take the letter, and began to read, but he had hardly reached its close, before "he dropped the letter from his hand, cast his eyes upon the ground, and began to weep bitterly. The porter surprised, said "Father, why do you weep? Have you not often said that we ought not to weep and be grieved at any thing but our sins?" To which Johannes replied, "Brother, I do not weep without reason, think how weak the Lord must see our faith to be, since he is unwilling to let us suffer a little want, even for a single day, without sending visible aid.

He foresaw that before evening, we should become confused and despond unless he sent immediate help to our faith by means of this charitable gift. It is because we possess so little confidence in the rich Lord, in whom we are encouraged to trust, that my tears flow." Thus far our author. Our friar wept at the unbelief, at the weak confidence God's people possess towards him. God must send deliverance so soon or they will not believe he cares for them. We should murmur in distrust, thought he, if food should be delayed for a single meal, and at this thought of the little faith of God's people he could not refrain himself and wept aloud.

Now who does not see that when God places us thus in straits to develop and strengthen our faith, unbelief is highly dishonorable to God? Who does not see that we greatly abuse Him, and do injustice to his Fatherly love? But again,

4. Faith in such circumstances is the condition of subsequent divine manifestation. If you will read the Bible through with your eye on this point, I think you will find that faith, in the absence of divine manifestation is every where made the condition of that manifestation. Christ says, "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him." Manifestation is conditioned upon obedience and faith in the absence thereof. These manifestations are to be obtained by us through faith in the promises while we are under the hidings of God's face, with no divine manifestation. Once more,

5. That faith is the most valuable, which can trust God with the least Divine manifestation. Abraham is called the "father of the faithful." Why? It will be well for us to consider what there was in Abraham's faith that give to him this honorable distinction.

Observe then, that God's manifestations to him were few and far between, only at distant intervals. There is no account of God's appearing to him but a few times in all his life. The fulfillment of the promises was long delayed. God said, "Get thee out from thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation." Abraham departed forthwith and went to Canaan, trusting in the promises of God. He is promised a land, yet he never to the day of his death, inherited a foot of the soil, but was obliged to buy a portion for a burying place for his family. God told him he would make of him a great nation, yet twenty-four years after, he had no child except Ishmael. Where then was the promise? God did not come. But Abraham held fast, he hoped against hope, and believed the naked word of God. By and by, when Abraham was past age, his son was born. And then after that, God commanded him to give up his son, the child of promise, to sacrifice him, to slay him with his own hand, to offer him a burnt offering upon the mountains. What was this? It is the child upon whose life hangs the truth of God's promise, from him the "great nation" is to arise, and now he is to be slain. God has contradicted his own promise, besides the requirement is surely and absolutely wrong. It was most prodigious, Isaac must die! a human sacrifice!! by the hand of his own father! to the God of mercy. Can the thing be? But in the midst of all this darkness, for a strange thing indeed had come, in the midst of this darkness without and darkness within, he held fast, he set out to Mt. Moriah, said nothing to Sarah, this her only son was to be slain, told not his servant, but in the strength of his faith in God, he went on--the stern old man!--He built the altar, and laid the wood, and then, he bound Isaac, and stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. No wonder the Lord said, "Now I know that thou fearest God." No wonder God declared to him "Surely blessing I will bless thee and multiplying I will multiply thee for thou hast obeyed my voice." No wonder Abraham is placed at the head of the whole family of the faithful ones upon the earth. His faith was in the highest degree conspicuous. Consider the little light he had, the nature of the command, and see the touching and dreadful circumstances in which he stood and his faith and obedience are wonderful indeed. Well might Paul say of him, "He staggered not through unbelief." Great grace was upon Abraham.

Take the case of the Syrophenician woman. The circumstances were forbidding. She came and cried, "Have mercy on me O Lord thou son of David, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But to this Christ answered not a word. He did not deign to notice her it would seem. But she cried still. And then the disciples set in, and begged Him to grant her request and send her away because her entreaties were annoying. But to them he says, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she is not put off yet, she comes nearer, and still her cry goes up, "Lord help me!" And then He calls her a dog. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." But she was not to be shaken, she held on. "Truth Lord, I do not ask the bread from the children, but "even the dogs eat the crumbs from their master's table." I ask not the bread but only a crumb.["] And she got her fill. How honorable to God was this, and

how valuable was this her faith, it procured for her the great blessing which she asked. But,

6. Such faith will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And this is a reason why we should possess it. Satan will try to overthrow our faith. When he finds God withdrawing Himself, and wrapping his mantle of darkness about him and retiring into the thick darkness, he will try us with doubts and fears, and forebodings. When he finds our expectations blasted, and our plans crossed, and our comforts stricken down, he will fall to and overthrow our confidence in God's goodness and favor, if he can. But brethren, hold fast to your shield, the shield of faith, and you will quench all his fiery darts.

7. Such faith will procure all needed divine manifestation, all the light will be thrown upon God's dealings with us, that it is well, and best for us to have. There can be no mistake here. Just as much light and love will be manifested as it is best for us on the whole, to have revealed to us. Once more,

8. It is often better for our health both spiritual and bodily, to be left to exercise faith in darkness, than to have copious manifestations for a season, and then have them withdrawn, and thus be subject to an alternate excitement and depression, which would often prostrate the mental and bodily powers, and leave the soul unstrung.

REMARKS.

1. The state of mind here described is entirely different from apathy or worldly-mindedness. If persons imagine themselves trusting in God, while they are worldly-minded, they are grossly deceived. This state of faith and trust is as far as possible from that, and where persons are lying in apathy let them not say, they are trusting in God, while walking in darkness, for this faith is always accompanied with obedience.

2. Sometimes a very great darkness, comes over the soul, and this immediately before a great divine manifestation.

One of Abraham's manifestations was preceded by "a horror of great darkness." This is more common than is generally supposed. Before God reveals his face in sunshine, he is apt to withdraw it, to veil it in a thick cloud, so as to try our faith and bring it into strong exercise, and if in this withdrawment and darkness, our faith is strong and the mind holds on to its confidence we may expect the divine manifestation to succeed, and to be copious and refreshing to the soul.

3. It is a common but great mistake to suppose that great faith is inconsistent with great present darkness. It is indeed, with the darkness of unbelief, but not with such as Abraham had, and as Job had, and as that in the text. Or to suppose that such darkness is inconsistent with Entire Sanctification. The darkness of our text does not imply present unbelief, nor departure from God, and they mistake who think that it does. But because of this mistake, inquirers after light and divine manifestation, are charged often with unbelief and disobedience. When a man is under a cloud, and feeling after God, and sets his heart upon finding him, God often for wise reasons, withholds his light from the soul, hides Himself, does not manifest Himself. The soul prays, and prays, and prays, and in faith too, but God withholds. He is preparing him in the best manner possible, to receive the light, before He gives it. The soul prays, and struggles, and searches, and tries to lay hands upon a promise, but the divine manifestation does not come. If in such a case the individual is told that it is certainly because of unbelief in his soul, that God reveals not His glory, that it must be so, that he is all unbelief and in sin, or God would have come long ago, it will almost surely bring discouragement. How easy thus to put out the light which is leading him, and cause him to give up, and lose the end to which the Spirit within him was drawing him, the great and joyful enlargement and

manifestation of the divine presence.

4. Many think the darkness spoken of by John, to be all the darkness there is, that all darkness is that of unbelief, and they understand John to say, If we say we are Christ's and walk in darkness, no matter of what kind, we lie. Whereas men may be in a very high exercise of faith, and be in darkness, as they actually are when they cleave to God, as Abraham and Job did in the midst of darkness. I remark once more,

5. They are mistaken who promise instant light upon the exercise of faith. It is common to say, If you will believe, that moment you will have a flood of light poured upon you from God's throne. Now the text implies the contrary. The Bible nowhere, so far as I know, promises constant light to faith. This is a world of trial, and there are innumerable reasons why there should not be constant light and divine manifestation. Again,

6. The text contains the direction that should be given to persons in such cases. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God." When we cannot see the way that He takes, we are nevertheless to confide in his faithfulness, and rest in the immutability of his wise counsel, as upon a firm rock. Read the chapter and you will see that Isaiah had been led to this experience--into this state of mind, by God's dealings with him, and his people. It is remarkable how God qualifies his servants to speak a word in season, how he leads his children through darkness, and settles their souls upon Himself, so that they may be able to 'speak a word in season to them who are weary.' And here we have the word, the heavenly counsel to administer to all those who thus mourn the hidings of God's face.

7. Many confound faith with divine manifestation and think there is no faith without it. They think they have great faith when the candle of the Lord shines around them, when they stand in the sunlight of the divine glory, so that their faces shine with the reflection of that glory. Now they may have faith, of course they do have faith; but their joy, their spirit of praise and thanksgiving is not to be mistaken for faith. Directly beside the man whose face shines with glory, and who is ready to shout aloud in the excess of joy, whose eye is open, and who can look like Stephen, into heaven, and see God upon his throne and the angels around Him, there may be one kneeling, a cloud around him, feeling after God with a confidence not to be shaken though the heavens thunder and the earth quake; and this second may be no less acceptable to God--nay, he may be more acceptable than the first. When did Job honor God more than when in darkness deep as midnight, in trials without and within, he planted his foot firmly upon God's goodness--"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him." Never. Once more,

8. Many refuse to walk unless they can walk by sight, in the divine manifestation, constantly. They will not take a single step. They will not trust God out of their sight, and think themselves doing well to insist that God shall not let them walk by faith a single foot, but that all the time the light of his manifestation must encircle them. They believe, when everything, without and within, is light and glory, then they do well; but once withdrawn, and they have no resource but faith, then they will not trust at all. They will exclaim as Jonah did when the gourd was blasted, 'I do well to be angry,' as if they were not to trust God unless all is light, and God's countenance, all covered with smiles, is visible to them. But such persons are greatly deceived if they imagine they have faith, when, as a matter of fact, they dare not trust God a moment out of their sight.

9. It is not pleasant, but often very useful to walk in such darkness. Was not Job greatly benefited by the scenes through which he passed? What Christian has not been struck with the manner in which God turns for the faithful soul, afflictions into benefits? These seasons of darkness are among the afflictions which are not for the present joyous, but grievous, but which afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. Persons in this condition should not be treated harshly, and those who treat them so, who snuff at them and call them to repentance, though they may do it from a good motive, are nevertheless very much mistaken. They may have sinned in doubting his love, but it is by no means certain because they are in darkness, that they have sinned. Such persons are like the bruised reed which must not be broken, and the smoking flax, which must be fanned rather than rudely quenched; they need to be encouraged, to be told that God is doing the best He can for them and for all--that this their darkness is among the 'all things' that shall work together for their good if they love God; and instead of telling them, you will have light if you believe, tell them to believe, light or dark. Point them to God's truthfulness, insist upon trust, whatever the appearance is, whatever darkness is without, and whatever trials are within--do so, and you will help them. But denounce them, take it for granted they have fallen into sin, and it may be they will really and sadly backslide, and go away from God for months and months. To do so, is worrying the sheep instead of feeding them. It is setting a cruel dog upon the already jaded creature, instead of urging her to rest safely under the care of the Good Shepherd, and telling her that He will protect the flock and keep the raging wolves off, that He will gently lead the flock, that He will 'gather the lambs in his arm, and gently lead those that are with young,' that the weak and the weary are his special care, and that no fear need be indulged in, either of his ability or disposition to keep all right and bring them safe home. His children should be assured that He hears them and will care for their good, though they cannot see Him, and that the cloud that has passed over them is only to quicken their faith, and make them honor Him, that He may honor them before the universe, for their strong faith in their fierce conflicts.

10. The life of faith in opposition to a life of excitement in manifestations is a calm and steady life, and greatly desirable.

11. God is trying to develop our faith, and confirm it so that nothing that can occur in his providence however inexplicable, can stumble us. He knows the end from the beginning, and he knows that many things happen which will seem strange, and exceedingly trying. He sees many trials ahead awaiting his people, and He would prepare them for those trials that they may pass them safely. He wishes to make their ship staunch and firm, so that they may weather the storms, and escape the fury of the angry surge. He would give us strength and ballast, so that we may outride the waves, and come safely out from the war of winds and waters.

12. He is the best Christian who can trust the most perfectly in God, in the greatest outward discouragements, and inward withdrawings of God's face. He is the best Christian, and manifests the highest degree of religion in that very hour of trust, amid all possible discouragements and trials. When he can say "I know my God, I can trust Him and I will, come what may," his faith is perfect. He is in the state of the highest virtue, that which is most acceptable to God.

13. Manifestations do much to develop the sensibility, and draw out the emotions, and soften and melt the soul, and they do much good if sought and used properly, but when sought as a luxury they do mischief. Faith must be drawn out and strengthened, as well as emotion quickened and deepened, and this can be done most effectually by throwing men where they can do nothing but hang on the naked promise and character of God.

14. Many persons seem unwilling to let God take any other course than to reveal his way continually; they envy those who do thus walk in the light, as though that were the only religious state, the only state in which they can do good, as comprehending the whole of religion in the heart. These ideas should be put away, for they are false and hurtful, and are a great stumbling-block to any church where they gain a foothold, they set a people drifting in one direction, after a thing which is false, they will work a monstrosity Christian character, and will tend strongly to fanaticism. Let a professor of religion run away with one idea, and push it to the last link, and he is verging to a fanatical state of mind. If he is trying to lash his feelings up to the required point, rasping them into strong excitement, creating a whirlwind of emotion, and seeking for a flood of feeling to pour forth continually, he endangers his piety, and jeopardises the soundness of his faith. There are many stages through which we are to pass. I see a man in the light of God's face--the way of God all visible to him, and rejoicing in his Lord's presence, and I rejoice, for I love to see it. I love to hear him pour out his heart, to see the strong current of emotion flowing from the depths of feeling within, and to see his face shine like the face of an angel. But if I see the same man in darkness, and hear him say, Though God slay me, I will trust in Him, I rejoice in that too. Instead of denouncing him as a hypocrite or an unbeliever, I would say, Be of good cheer, God speed, you go on; darkness and light shall alternate with your soul--light to develop your sensibility, and darkness to exercise and confirm your faith. Keep your soul in all; they are all needful and beneficial, and in all your darkness, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon your God. Let us not be deceived by supposing there are not many stages of experience, but rather say, I welcome them all--I love to pass through them all--I will trust under them all. I will not fear, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, for thy rod and thy staff, O God, shall support me. Let not Christians be afraid to pass then,--through the gate that unbars its doors, and bids us enter into joy unspeakable and full of glory. Once more,

15. Do not confound apathy and backsliding with that state of mind that trusts God in darkness. They are as much opposites as two states can be. One is a state of obedience, the other of disobedience--one of strong faith, the other of no faith at all--one of great and active love, the other of perfect stupidity and stagnation of soul like a putrid lake. In one, the soul rises above all the gusts and storms of doubt and fear into the calm blue sky of unfaltering trust; in the other, it sinks below both blue sky and howling wind, as into the death-damps of the grave. Do not, I beseech you, mistake apathy for trust in God. Beloved, will you trust in God?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/fearing-the-lord-and-walking-in-darkness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net