

The Way

by Robert Anderson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of making a choice between serving God or mammon, and the consequences of our choice.

Scripture: Exodus 19:5, Psalm 34:11, Psalm 111:10 - 112:1, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 12:6

Topics: "Godly Living", "Fear Of God"

Description

Solomon, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, reflects on the vanity of life without considering eternity and the judgment of God. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of living a righteous and godly life as a response to God's grace, not as a means of earning salvation. The fear of the Lord, rooted in reverence and awe, is a key aspect of godliness, acknowledging both God's mercy and majesty. Christians are called to be a peculiar people, distinctively God's own, zealous for good works, and to live in a manner that glorifies God in all aspects of life.

Transcript

THE WAY

CHAPTER ONE

THE scene is laid in the court of a Roman procurator. The occasion is a public trial. The prosecutors are the religious leaders of the Jews. The accused is a man of their own race and creed. Once a true and zealous "son of the Church" - an honoured and trusted disciple of their strictest and most distinguished school - he has lapsed from orthodoxy and joined "the sect of the Nazarenes." Worse than this he is a ringleader of that apostasy, and has gone to such extremes of heresy as to teach that there is salvation for others than the elect people of God.

"Away with such a fellow from the earth" had been their cry, "it is not fit that he should live." If only they were free he would receive short shrift at their hands; but he is under the protection of Roman law, and so they have to suffer the indignity of being compelled to bring him before a court of their Roman masters. But on what charge can he be arraigned? The figment that the Nazarene founded a new religion has not yet been invented. Else their task would be an easy one; for the Empire is intolerant of new religions.

And a mere lapse from doctrinal orthodoxy within a religion authorised by the state, no Roman magistrate will deal with. So they have instructed one Tertullus, a professional pleader, to represent them. And

Tertullus, skilfully masking the real ground of the accusation, charges the prisoner with being a disturber of the peace, a public pest, and a man tainted with sedition. Thus it was that his co-religionists described the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Destined to do more to move the world than all the "Caesars" of history, he stood there, an ugly little Jew, not only friendless and hated, but despised.

Oriental cruelty had a mode of execution more horrible even than crucifixion. Impaled upon a stake planted in the ground, the victim was left to a lingering death, in the public view. And such is the figure which, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle uses to describe the utter wreck of his physical being. He was "given a stake for the flesh." And thus impaled, as it were, he was "made a spectacle unto the world, o both to angels and to men." His face was battered and scarred, and his muscular frame wrenched and torn, by the stoning at Lystra, when, with arms nerved by religious hate, his cruel enemies had pounded him to death.

Till then he had ranked as an orator; but now he articulates with difficulty, and his speech is deemed contemptible. And he had his own "Gethsemane," when thrice he put up the prayer that the Almighty power which God had permitted him to administer in healing others might be used to bring himself relief. But the answer came, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And so he had learned to glory in his infirmities. His hideous scars were "the brand marks of the Lord Jesus," whose slave he rejoiced to be.

Sufferings for Christ's sake refine and humble a man, but they never humiliate or crush him. So with courage undaunted, and with all the dignity which becomes a servant of God, he confronted both his persecutors and his judge. And after traversing explicitly the charges of sedition and disorder, he rolled back upon his accusers their charge of heresy. We can picture to ourselves his look and gesture as, pointing to those recreant Jews, he exclaimed, "This I confess unto thee, that according to 'The Way' (which they call a sect) so worship I our fathers' God, believing all things that are according to the law, and that are written in the prophets."

"The Way." The expression indicates, as Lange tells us, "a certain mode of life and conduct"; or as Canon Cook, with greater fulness, gives it, "a definite and progressive direction of the inner and outer life of man." On the Apostle's lips it means the true Faith, and a right life. And its occurrences in the Acts of the Apostles give proof not only that it was in common use, but that it was a phrase of the disciples' own choosing. What first led the Apostle to "separate the disciples" was that, after his three months' ministry in the synagogue at Ephesus, certain of the Jews "spake evil of the Way."

At Ephesus it was too, that, later on, the pagan idolaters "made no small stir about the Way." Nor was the word unknown to Paul in his unconverted days. The High Priest's commission given him in view of his Damascus journey, was that "if he found any of the Way, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." And referring to this, when now seized and charged by the Jerusalem Jews, he reminded them that he had "persecuted the Way unto the death." The last occurrence of the word is where we read that Felix, "having more perfect knowledge of the Way," refused to condemn the Apostle on the charges so cunningly devised against him.

At a recent sale of a bankrupt nobleman's effects, it was mentioned that a beautiful little crystal goblet, which fetched four thousand guineas, had been lying for years unnoticed with articles of common glass, for common use. And so it is with this word "The Way." It has fallen out of notice, and lies neglected and forgotten. And yet it is not only beautiful but useful, for it has no synonym in our English tongue.

CHAPTER TWO

FOOLS

GOD has no pleasure in fools, the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us - that wonderful treatise upon the philosophy of life. "Be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools." "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few." "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools." Fools are of different types; and, as a reference to the Hebrew will tell us, it is "the fat fool" that is here intended.

Not that he is always fat; and if any one assumes that men are fools because they are fat he will soon find out his mistake. But the fat fool is the "type." We all know him. And we are disposed to like him; for he is generally an amiable sort of creature, with no malice, and not a little good nature. If his good resolutions were realised, he would be counted a saint; and if he carried out his projects he might pass for a genius. But he has neither strength of will nor force of character for achievements of any kind.

This is one of many passages of Scripture intended to warn us against trifling with God. It tells us that it is better not to make vows than to make them and then leave them unpaid. It reminds us, moreover, that the God of revelation is the God of nature. For nature is stern and unpitying with fools. And the revelation of Grace in the Gospel is not, as some suppose, an effort on God's part to make amends for what they deem His laches and mistakes in bygone ages. Neither is it a setting aside of the great principles of His government.

On the contrary, it is a provision for bringing fallen men to blessing and peace by bringing them into harmony with those eternal principles. God has no pleasure in fools. And Grace has failed of its due effect upon the heart and life if a man does not cease to be a fool when he becomes, in the true sense of the word, a Christian. "But," some one will exclaim, "are we not told to become fools for Christ's sake?" Yes, and people are apt to make this an excuse for playing the fool, which is not at all what it means.

A Christian may seem to his fellowmen to be a fool. But it is one thing to be a fool, and quite another thing to seem to be a fool. A man once built a great ship far inland. He must have been reckoned the greatest fool of his day; but as events proved, he was the only wise man. For "things not seen as yet" were realities to Noah. Everybody saw them afterwards when it was too late. I remember the case of a young man who married a moneyless girl and then sailed for Australia, taking with him his bride and what little money he could scrape together; it was only about £600.

When the two families heard that he had used his capital in buying some land in an out-of-the-way place, they said he ought to be shut up in a lunatic asylum. But there was gold in that piece of land, and when, some years later, I met him in London, he was very rich; and the relatives had given up talking about lunatic asylums. The Christian is a follower of Him who likened Himself to a man that parts with all that he has in order to buy a field, because he knows there is treasure hidden in it.

The Christian acts in the present with a view to the future. For he knows that while the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal. But the "fat fool" is not the worst type of fool. Though his "thoughts" never come to anything, he means well. But the fool who is pilloried in the fourteenth and fifty-third Psalms has thoughts that are positively evil, and they govern his conduct. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." In his heart, mark; for the Bible never contemplates folly so

gross as to say it openly.

The only atheists are the apostates; for there is no darkness so dense as that which covers us when some strong clear light is quenched. "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend and the Talmud than that this universal frame is without a mind." These were Bacon's words. "The understanding revolts at such a conclusion," is Darwin's repudiation of the suggestion that "blind chance" could account for "that grand sequence of events" of which biology treats. Herbert Spencer proclaimed this sort of academic atheism; but, here in England at least, notwithstanding the efforts of a clique of second-rank scientists, Spencerism is as dead as its author.

As any intelligent thinker can see, his objections to the hypothesis of creation apply with far greater force to his figment of abiogenesis. The word used for "fool" in these Psalms of David has no kinship with Solomon's fool in the passage above quoted from Ecclesiastes. I wonder whether, when David here wrote the word nabal, his thoughts glanced back to his wife Abigail's first husband, the man of whom she said, "Nabal is his name, and folly is with him"; the man who was "very great" and very rich, but who was "churlish and evil in his doings," and who repelled David's courteous appeals with insult.

Proud of his wealth and greatness, he despised David. That same night, we read, "he held a feast in his house like the feast of a king." "But it came to pass about ten days after that he died." In one of his parables our Divine Lord pictures for us a fool of the Nabal type.' Such an one is "he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." God has a place in the creed of his lips, but the creed of his heart is atheistic; and the creed of his heart finds expression in his acts.

So, forgetting the Giver of all his heaped-up blessings, he lays himself out for a life of ease and sensual enjoyment. "But," the parable proceeds, "God said unto him, Thou fool: this night thy soul shall be required of thee." For such a man, to live is self, and to die is loss. The sixteenth chapter of Luke brings before us fools of both types. It is one of the perverted chapters of the Bible. The popularly accepted version of it may be summarised as follows: A certain rich man had a steward who was accused of robbing him.

So he gave him notice of dismissal. The steward then set himself to rob him more flagrantly than ever; and, mirabile dictu, his master commended him for his cleverness. Never, surely, did rustic preacher propound anything sillier to a company of yokels! And in answer to the ridicule which it naturally excited, the Teacher then propounded another parable, with the moral, "Woe to the rich; blessed are the poor "-thus seeking to cover mere nonsense by pestilent error. Indeed, if error and nonsense were solid, enough has been said and written upon the sixteenth chapter of Luke to sink the biggest ship that ever put to sea!

In these parables we have a series of exquisite pictures drawn by the hand of the Master to illustrate the great life-choice. In the prodigal of the preceding chapter we have the case of one who "wasted" his "portion of goods" in the pursuit of selfish and sinful pleasure, but who afterwards repented and was restored. In the steward we have the case of one who wasted his master's "goods" by unthrift and neglect, but who repented and was forgiven. And in the rich man of the closing parable of the series, we have one who lived for this world and died impenitent.

This "steward" was a typical "fat fool." He was "unrighteous" in the sense that he was not a true steward; unrighteous in the sense in which the money is called "unrighteous mammon." Not because it was what men call bad money, but because the best of good money is not "the true riches." He was a listless, easy-going man who let things slide, leaving debts uncollected, and allowing accounts to run on. He was

thus wasting his master's property. It was a case of habitual carelessness, not of definite acts of dishonesty.

His dishonesty was of the passive kind. And what earned for him his employer's praise was not his dishonesty at all, but his action when brought to book, and dishonesty of any kind was no longer possible. Instead of making enemies of his master's debtors by suddenly forcing payment of long-standing accounts, he set himself to make them his friends - to place them under obligation to him - by giving them receipts in full for payment in part, making good the balance from his own money.

And this, as he said, in order that, when he was put out of the stewardship, they might receive him into their houses. This is the whole point of the parable. Its lessons are explained by the Lord Himself: "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail ye may be received into the everlasting tabernacles." It is not meant to teach us that roguery is commendable. The moral is akin to that of the parable of the treasure hid in a field, namely, the wisdom of incurring a seeming loss in order to secure a real gain; of using the present in view of the future; of living in a world which is "passing away," though apparently so real, under the power of that other world which, though unseen, is abiding and eternal.

It is the enforcement, in a higher sphere, of that which is a common-place with "the children of this world." For no man ever achieves success who has not learned to make "today" subordinate to "tomorrow" who is not ready to yield some immediate advantage in order to secure a prospective gain. It is the philosophy of the man who foregoes pleasure for the sake of business, or who parts with his money in order to secure a provision for old age. The opposite extreme is a case like that of Esau, "who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright" - bartered his future to secure enjoyment in the passing hour.

And the Esaus are many in every age - men and women who give way to some strong passion, or even, it may be, to some passing whim, at the cost of their whole life prospects. If the popular reading of the parable were right, the words which follow would be quite unmeaning. Rogues are often shrewd and careful in dealing with their ill-gotten gains; but many a man who may be trusted absolutely with what belongs to others is thriftless and careless with his own. And so the Lord adds, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

Spiritual gifts are our own: the mammon is entrusted to us as stewards. How false, then, is the notion that the life of the Christian is divided into watertight compartments, the religious being shut off from the secular! The Christian is as really God's servant in the one sphere as in the other. And this leads to the final lesson. The Christian is to use the world; but if he is betrayed into using it excessively, it becomes his master. And though mammon be a good servant, it is an evil master.

Moreover, "No servant can serve two masters. . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon." But with the money-loving Pharisee this *via media* is the ideal life. "Making the best of both worlds," it is called. But this God will not tolerate. We must choose between them, and the next parable is given to guide our choice.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LIFE CHOICE

"There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring

to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." THIS second parable was the Lord's reply to those who scoffed at His words, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The steward of the first parable is a "fat fool" who mends his ways; this rich man is a "Nabal" who dies in his folly.

In answer to the ridicule of those who claimed to serve both worlds, the Lord here brings before us the case of two men who made choice between them. The rich man, moreover, "fully received his good things"; nothing failed him of all that he had bar-gained for. And Lazarus was left destitute and desolate, with no provision but the refuse from the rich man's table, no bed but the roadway by the rich man's gate, no comforters but the dogs that licked his sores; for he was not only a beggar, but loathsomely diseased.

It is "a study in black and white," with no colour-shading in it, and therefore with no exact counterpart in real life. For wealth will not buy health, or peace of mind either. And without a good digestion and "a mind at leisure from itself, no amount of gold will enable any one to enjoy life - to "make merry sumptuously every day." And so it has come to pass that princes have died broken-hearted, and millionaires have killed themselves. And in the case of Lazarus the "black and white" is still more pronounced.

"I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," is an experience that some of us who have seen much of life in many phases of it will endorse. Nor can we forget the Lord's own promise to those who seek His kingdom first in their life on earth. But here mammon's man is presented to us in the brightest possible light, and God's man in the darkest possible shadow; and in view of their life-story we are bidden to make choice whom we will serve. But to guide our choice the veil is lifted which shuts out the unseen world.

"It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried." And now he is "tormented" and Lazarus is "comforted." This is not the award of the day of judgment; it is but the natural sequel to their life choice. There is an awful solemnity about the answer given to the rich man's appeal--" Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things." The word used expresses the receipt in full, "the exhaustion of every claim."

"Woe to the rich, but blessed are the poor," is the meaning which certain eminent theologians find in the story. But this only proves their ignorance of Christ and His teaching. There is neither merit in being poor nor woe in being rich. The poor man who chooses mammon may miss the "good things" he has bargained for, and die a pauper at the last. But his poverty will avail nothing to atone for the sin of his life choice; and his sin can have but one ending. And as for "them that are rich in this world," if they but learn "not to be high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy," they will in very truth "lay hold on the life which is life indeed," "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come."

But did not our Lord tell the young man who had "great possessions" to strip himself of everything and to come and follow Him? Yes, and another who "besought Him" for leave to do this very thing, was bidden to return to his own house and there to show how great things God had done for him. And there was a Lazarus whom He loved, who was not a beggar, but a wealthy man; and instead of telling him to sell his house, the Lord became his guest there. He knows each heart and each life, and deals with each in infinite wisdom.

To leave houses or lands for His sake, and the Gospel's, is to gain a hundredfold in blessing even in this life. But the man who pulls down his barns in order to make a fetish of poverty is as great a fool, and may be as profane, as he who builds them up again and makes a fetish of wealth. No generous mind will sympathise with pulpit diatribes against the godless rich. Poor creatures! their tenure of their "good things" is very brief and most uncertain: why should they not enjoy them while they may?

As well might we grudge his special comforts to the condemned criminal awaiting execution. And, after all, the rich man's case has much to be said for it. Draw the curtains of time so close around him as to shut out the light of eternity, and his lot is an enviable one. It is a fine thing to be well clothed, and to "make merry sumptuously every day." But, you say, his wealth is God's, and he is misusing it. Yes, it is God's, but it is not yours; and it is no business of yours how he spends it.

He is a better citizen than the man who hides his sovereigns in a cupboard or under the floor. In spite of his selfishness the sumptuous rich man, in scattering his money, does good to somebody. But if the miser and his piled up gold were flung into the sea the community would be none the poorer. The godless rich man is indeed contemptible, but not quite so contemptible as the godless poor. Look at him there as he passes in his splendid carriage, or as he sits at his luxurious table, and answer the question honestly, Has he not something to show for his evil bargain?

But what can be said for the diseased and hungry beggar lying at his gate? or, to take the present day pattern, see that miserable wretch cadging about the streets for a crust or a glass of beer, and picking up cigar ends from the gutter! The one has gained this world, at all events; and so long as he lives in this world he can hold up his head. The other has no less definitely chosen this world; but what a bargain he has made! In view of eternity, it is a question, which of them is most to be pitied; but there can be no question which of them is most to be despised.

The godless pauper - the man who chooses this world and is tricked out of his bargain - is the most utterly pitiful creature upon earth. At a gospel meeting in a village schoolhouse, years ago, I noticed a leather-faced old man who was listening with eyes and ears. He came back next morning to hear an address on prophetic truth, of which he took notes on a torn piece of packing paper, with the stump of a carpenter's pencil. He told me he was a travelling knife-grinder, and that, straying into the meeting by chance the evening before, he had received Christ.

A month afterwards a letter from him reached me, which, on being deciphered, testified that it was "grand to be a knife-grinder," for the children and villagers liked to watch him at his work, and he was able to tell them about Christ. I heard no more of him till the following winter, when a friend found him in a workhouse. "It was grand to be in a workhouse," he said, for he had such chances of "telling the others about Christ." And my last news of him was that he was dying in the infirmary; but full of joy, because the man in the next bed had been brought to Christ by his talking to him.

Such is the blessedness of "God's poor," "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom." What a contrast! "A certain rich man," mark; he is a mere millionaire, and his name is of no account. But "a certain beggar, named Lazarus." God knows His own, and their names are "written in heaven." But why Lazarus? His whole life-story is in that name, "God, my help." He is a 46th Psalm man. Dives is not in suffering because he has been rich; nor Lazarus comforted because he has been poor. Their condition is the natural sequel to their own deliberate life-choice.

The rich man has already received - received to the full - everything he bargained for; but Lazarus has received nothing - nothing at least but "evil things." As we have seen, there never was either a Dives or a Lazarus in real life. For the world never does satisfy; and God never does desert His own. "None that trust in Him shall be desolate"; but Lazarus was "desolate." And now the one is in suffering and the other is comforted. This is not, I repeat, the award of the great Day.

The one has yet to face the judgment, and to receive due punishment for all his sins; and the other still awaits the glory and the crown of faithfulness. And though the Lord's description of their life on earth is marked by the sort of hyperbole inseparable from a picture in black and white, there is no element of the kind in his words about the under world. In this present world Lazarus receives nothing but evil things, and in that world nothing but what "the God of all comfort" never fails to bestow, even here and now, upon those who trust in Him.

And what awful solemnity there is in the very tenderness and pathos of the answer to the rich man's appeal: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime fully receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art sorrowing." The equity of it all is perfect. It is as though the Lord put the challenge to us, "Take mammon's balance-sheet at its ideal best, and God's at its lowest and worst; and, even on that false estimate, work out the sum, and then make choice whom you will serve."

CHAP. FOUR - WHAT GRACE TEACHES

THE Reformation rescued the great truth of "justification by faith"; "justification by grace" was the characteristic truth of the revival of the nineteenth century. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith," the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians; "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Salvation is a gift - God's gift, bestowed on the principle of grace, received on the principle of faith. By the mission and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the kindness of God and His love towards man were "manifested."

And more than this, the revelation of Divine wrath against sin, and of Divine righteousness in forgiving sin, made it possible for God to assume a new attitude toward the world. "For the grace of God has been manifested, salvation-bringing to all men." Grace is the fundamental truth of Christianity as distinguished from Judaism. And it is impossible to exaggerate this truth. It may be expressed in words that are unworthy or unwise; it may be so divorced from all thoughts of the holiness and majesty of God as to become in a sense untrue; but overstated it cannot be.

The Divine sacrifice of Calvary surpasses the power of words to tell it, and no language can do justice to the freeness with which blessings flow to the believing sinner in virtue of the death of Christ. Peace has been made by that death; and God now stoops, even from the throne of His glory, to proclaim the peace which has thus been accomplished. Heaven is thrown open to the lost of earth. There is none too vile to enter there. "Without money and without price," without condition or reserve, the gift of life eternal is bestowed.

"The man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby." But in contrast with this, sinners saved by grace can testify that "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us." But the question arises, and it is time to press it earnestly and solemnly, how far a sober, righteous, and godly life characterises those who claim to have been thus blessed. The same grace which brings salvation trains us to this end.

For grace is not merely, as so many seem to think, a negation of something else - a setting aside of law - but a positive and active principle to mould and govern the Christian life. In writing to Titus, himself a teacher, the Apostle states the doctrine in a few terse and weighty words; in his epistles to Ephesus and Colosse, he unfolds it in its bearing on the duties and relationships of common life. And the difference between law and grace is not in the commandments given, but in the principle on which they are promulgated and enforced.

The life and death of Christ have raised the standard of our relationships with God, and therefore of our obedience to Him. Under the law self-love was the measure of man's love to man, for no higher love was known to him; but now "We perceive THE LOVE because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Such is the precept grace enjoins. Law has a penalty for every transgression; grace has no penalties. Law links a blessing with the commandment, but it is as the reward for obedience; with grace the blessing is freely given, and is itself the motive to obedience.

We need to distinguish between "law" as a principle of obedience, and "the law" as a penal code. In this second aspect of it "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." The real people of God were never under it. But until Christ came they were under law as "a schoolmaster." Although they were sons they were treated as children. But the school of grace is for grown-up sons. The training is on a different principle. For the essential difference, I again repeat, is not in the precepts enjoined, though these do differ, but in the principle on which they are enforced.

And this leads me to emphasise the much needed truth that sin is not become less heinous because grace is reigning. Nor is the moral distance less immense which separates the sinner from God. This distance indeed is all the greater, just because of the intimacy of the relationship in which the believer stands to Him. If these words should cause surprise to any, no better proof can be afforded of the widespread need there is to enforce the truth they teach. With many it is to be feared that a one-sided apprehension of grace has tended to levity in their dealings with God.

The New Testament is read as though it were given to supersede the Old, and the grace and love of God are used to set aside the truth of His holiness and majesty. I have spoken of separation between the sinner and God. Can sin then avail to separate the believer from Him? The question claims a twofold answer. The union that is bought with the blood which cleanses from all sin, and depends only on the life that is ours in Christ, nothing can disturb. And life, moreover, is the only ground of fellowship with God.

But fellowship is possible only in "the light" as the sphere of its enjoyment; and if any one claims it, while walking in darkness, he lies. In a real sense, therefore, sin does separate from God. Not that walking in the light implies a sinless course, nor yet that walking in darkness necessarily implies acts of moral evil. The claim to have attained a sinless walk is proof of darkness, and "the light" is the true sphere in which the believer mourns his sin, and judges it in presence of the blood which was shed to atone for it.

But what we need to remember is that the bonds by which God has bound us to Himself only serve to intensify the heinousness of sin, and therefore to widen the moral distance which separates us from Him when sin marks our course. Wantonly to strike another is an outrage; but if that other be a benefactor, the wrong is far more grievous; and if not only a benefactor but a parent, the act is infamous. The relationship does not lessen - it immensely aggravates - the sin. The lasting wonder of redemption is that sinners can approach a holy God; not persons who have been sinners, but those who are such.

But the danger is lest this should become divorced from the remembrance of the provision by which alone it is made possible, and that thus we should come to have light thoughts of God, and to forget His holiness and majesty. We have "boldness" to approach; but boldness is far removed from levity. And let us mark the ground on which this confidence is based. It depends on the perfectness of our redemption, the power of the blood to sanctify us, the fitness of the "new and living Way" provided, and, above all, the presence of a Priest, and such a Priest, over the house of God.

But even this is not all, and the words which follow are precisely those which most need to be enforced: "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The reference here to the ritual of the great sin-offering of the nineteenth chapter of Numbers is unmistakable. It is with a heart judged in the presence of the Cross, and a life practically purged from evil (for such was the typical meaning of the bath which followed the sprinkling of the water of purification), that we are bidden to "draw near."

So it has been in every age. The tenth chapter of Hebrews is in this respect but the New Testament version of the twenty-fourth Psalm: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart " - the purged heart representing, as in Hebrews, the attitude of the soul to God; the clean hands, the actions of the outward life. God demands a moral fitness in those who approach Him. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me" is not the obsolete precept of a bygone dispensation, but an eternal principle based upon the character of God.

How important, then, that we should search His Word to learn the spirit which becomes us as we seek His presence. But let no humble believer be offended by this; nor should the exhortation sadden the hearts of any who are contrite: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

CHAPTER V

THE SOBER LIFE

THE Bible, on its human side, is an Eastern book, abounding in imagery and figure; and when we are told that grace teaches us, the language, of course, is figurative. Whether we live under law or under grace, God is the teacher. But the passage emphasises the truth that it is on the principle of grace that He trains us, not of law. And these two principles are wholly incompatible. Both are good and right, but they are inconsistent. The essential characteristic of law is the assertion of rights; the essential characteristic of grace is the giving up of rights.

"He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us." This is the great manifestation of grace - the self-sacrifice of the Son of God. And it is on this principle that He deals with us as now redeemed. It is a thorough paradox to a carnal man; but the philosophy of the heart runs deeper than that of the head. An illustration may be useful to mark the contrast between the two principles. "Thou shalt not steal" was the command that pealed forth from Sinai; and a curse followed upon transgression.

"Let him that stole steal no more" is the kindred command of grace. And now mark the sequel: "But rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Law forbids our taking what is another's; grace goes further, and enjoins our giving up what is our own. And so, through all the practical teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the warnings, even

against sins of the grossest kind, are based upon blessings freely given, or upon Divine relationships freely formed.

"The grace of God trains us." In three other passages of the New Testament this same word is used of God's dealings with His people, and in these it is rightly rendered chasten. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," is the Lord's word to Laodicea. And in the solemn warning against unworthily partaking of the Lord's Supper, the Apostle writes: "We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Law would condemn; grace chastens. And the other passage - Hebrews xii.- marks the distinction still more clearly.

The fifth verse takes up the very words of the warning to Laodicea: "Despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." And mark the ground on which the chastening comes. It is not based upon sin committed, but upon the relationship in which the sinner stands to God. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" But the difference does not end here. Punishment, strictly so called, has relation to the past; chastening to the future.

Punishment is imposed because of sin committed; chastening is inflicted with a view to the good of him who is the subject of it. He chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." The spirit of legality that is indigenous to our hearts has no more common or subtle phase than that of regarding chastisement as necessarily a punishment for sin. And the teaching of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, the Divine antidote for this error, is but little understood.

Indeed, our beliefs in this respect are but the old doctrine of Eliphaz the Temanite: "Who ever perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" That one who lay crushed and desolate beneath so terrible a storm of seemingly unpitying judgments could be "a perfect and upright man that feared God and eschewed evil," was a phenomenon entirely beyond the theology of the Temanite; and so he and his companions only forced Job back upon the assertion of his own integrity, and drove him still further from the God who was seeking thus to make him "partaker of His holiness."

And in the end the "comforters" of Job had to seek the prayers of Job to save them from the wrath their words had kindled.' Grace teaches us. The Christian course is a discipline. And the result is a sober, righteous, and godly life on earth, with heart and eye fixed upon a blessed hope above it and beyond it. "Soberly, righteously, and godly": these words represent the threefold aspect of life - to a man's own spirit, to his neighbour, and to God. And it is certain that these qualities are not characteristic of the age we live in.

Sobriety - where is it to be found in this age of display, and hurry, and greed? Just as a nation's commerce may be estimated by its coinage, so its thoughts may be judged by its language; and this word "sober" has so long been run in a special and narrow groove that now it almost refuses to expand to the thought that is here intended. And if the word be wanting, we may be sure the quality it expresses has grown rare. Elsewhere in this epistle this same word is rendered, in our version, "sober," "temperate," and "discreet"; and it embraces all this, and more.

Etymologically, it means possessed of a sound mind; and this idea always clings to it. It implies a habit of mind opposed to extremes, and most of all to levity. He who has been trained in the school of grace is marked by soundness of judgment in all things. Sobriety should characterise the Christian, not only in his conduct and circumstances, but in his language and his thoughts. And we must not suppose that spiritual life is unaffected by the world without. Practical Christianity is always leavened by the prevailing influences

of the time.

Because of the national vices of the Cretans, the flock among whom Titus ministered needed sharp rebuke. They were a mendacious, carnal, avaricious race; hence the weighty precepts of the Epistle. This word "soberly," and its kindred adjectives and verbs and nouns, are used but sixteen times in the New Testament, and six of these are found in this brief letter. And though it may be disputed whether the special Cretan vices mark our own society to-day, no one will question that insobriety is specially characteristic of this much-lauded age of ours.

Nor is this true only of "the City." The baneful influences which surround us, the haste and rivalry which mark our commercial life, have invaded social, and even family life. What is said of the wicked seems true of all together now - they are "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest." Life is becoming a scramble. And Christian life is leavened by the evil influence. Many an earnest worker might take up the sad lament, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

And such may need the discipline of the Father's house. But this must never be allowed to obscure the truth of the believer's security in Christ. "Him that cometh unto Me," the Lord declares, "I will in no wise cast out." These words are generally read as a "Gospel message." But such is not their purpose. It is not that He never refuses to receive a repentant sinner, but that He never expels a sinner whom He has thus received. Most true it is that He never shuts the door against any one who comes to Him.

But what He tells us here is that no one whom He once has welcomed shall ever be put outside the door again. Even if the words themselves were not so clear, the context would make this plain. For He goes on to say, it is the Father's will that not one of those who come to Him shall be lost. And He adds, "I will raise him up at the last day." But this only serves to bring into greater prominence the need of chastening. And "the chastening of the Lord" may explain what sometimes seems capricious and even harsh in His dealings with His people.

For are we not perplexed and distressed at times, when the most earnest, and seemingly the most useful, Christians are laid aside or called away? As seen by us, "the world to come" stands apart from "this present world." But it is not so with God. And if our view included both worlds, Divine dealings which now seem strange or harsh would appear as proofs of His wisdom and His love. (Footnote - Hebrews x. 26 - 29, is misused to check "boldness," whereas its purpose, as expressed in verse 35 (cf verse 19), is "Cast not away therefore your boldness.")

As Alford writes, "It is the sin of apostasy from Christ back to the state which preceded the reception of Christ, viz. Judaism. This is the ground sin of all other sins. . . . It is not of an act, or any number of acts, of sin, that the writer is speaking, which might be repented of and blotted out; but of a state of sin in which a man is found when that day shall come." And Heb. vi. 4-8 is to be explained in the same way, as the rest of that chapter so clearly proves.) What an example of this we find in the case of one who is perhaps the grandest figure on the stage of Old Testament story.

Turning away from the treasures of Egypt, and all the power and pomp of the throne of the Pharaohs, Moses threw in his lot with the despised and suffering people of God. A stiff-necked and rebellious people they were; but he bore with them, interceding for them when they sinned, and guiding and training them day by day, during all their wilderness wanderings, until they reached the land of promise. And yet for one hasty act of unfaithfulness, into which he was betrayed when provoked beyond endurance, he was refused the prize of his whole life's work.

What relentlessness and severity was this! But "judge nothing before the time." The vision of "the holy mount" reveals to us that Moses was singled out for extraordinary privilege and blessedness and glory. And thus we see "the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

CHAPTER VI

THE RIGHTEOUS LIFE

IT is a common error to read the Old Testament as though the blessings promised to the righteous were now the birthright of the justified. True it is that in the present economy prominence is given to what is spiritual - to the heart as distinguished from the outward life, whereas the converse of this was necessarily characteristic of a dispensation of law. But this only serves to prove more clearly that "the righteous" of the Psalms are those who are practically upright. Grace has not changed the character of God, nor yet the principles of His moral government.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good," is not an obsolete precept, inconsistent with grace; it is precisely what grace teaches. We seem in danger of supposing that "believers" have access to God in spiritual things, and a right to expect blessing in temporal things, without regard to the character of their life. Grace brings life eternal to the drunkard or the thief; but the one does not celebrate the event by a carouse, nor does the other steal the watch of the evangelist who has ministered the Gospel to him.

And why not? Their natural instincts would prompt them to it. Yes, but the same grace which brings them life, teaches them. And eternal life is not like a railway-ticket, or a trinket, that a man may lose if he have a bad pocket, or fall in with bad company. If they have been saved, they have repented and have been born again. It is not that the one has reckoned up the bottles he has drunk, and the other the pockets he has emptied, and that they have mourned and wept at the retrospect.

The repentance of the Gospel is far deeper than repentance for sins, which is the lowest type of repentance. Nor is it a change of conduct merely, but a change of mind. It is not that a man's acts are different, but that he himself is different. The drunkard may sit before his empty bottles, and cry, in bitterness of soul, "Forgive my sins," and yet turn to his drink again before the week is over. The very prayer, moreover, often contains the implied assertion that a man could do better if he tried; and that he will do better if only the past be forgiven.

But grace goes deeper far than this. Law bids a man look back upon his life, and plead, "Forgive my sins"; but grace teaches him to look within, and to cry, with a heart laid bare before a holy and righteous God, "Be merciful to ME the sinner." A holy God can have fellowship with such a man; and a righteous God can crown him with blessings. But grace does not suspend the action of the principles on which God governs the world; and the sinner, though thus blessed and saved, may suffer, all his days on earth, the consequences of his sins.

It would betray strange ignorance, alike of doctrine and of fact, to quote David's words, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," and to argue that there can be no Christians in the workhouse, and no children of Christians on the streets. Not that adversity is proof of sin. It may, as in the case of Job, be proof of special dealing from God, to lead to special blessing. Indeed the thirty-seventh Psalm, above quoted, is pervaded by this thought. But the great public principle of God's dealings with men is that the upright prosper.

Rogues may sometimes become millionaires, but it is proverbial that ill-gotten wealth is fleeting. And, moreover, even in this life, a man's balance at the banker's is not the only, nor even the truest, test of prosperity. The rule is that integrity reaps its reward. If a Christian grocer be less righteous in his dealings than his atheist rival next door, God will not turn men's hearts to buy his tea. On the contrary, the man will probably lose his customers and become bankrupt; and his rival will probably prosper.

And the result will only prove that the God whom the atheist denies is a righteous God. But it will be urged, "It is not God who does this; it is merely the ordinary course of things." Here is atheism with a vengeance! "The ordinary course of things" means just the ordinary course of God's moral government of the world, and that is that righteousness prospers. It is not always so, as we have seen; but it is the rule. If a man walks over a precipice, God does not interfere, either to save or to destroy him.

But the catastrophe which follows is the result of natural laws which God has ordained. The laws of Nature are so seldom suspended that when the phenomenon occurs we describe it as a miracle. The laws of Providence, on the other hand, have many a disturbance, many an exception. But yet both have been ordained by the same God. And these principles of God's moral government display his character. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ?

" If Christian men of business descend to the common tricks of trade, will God accept them as his servants? Or will their prayers avail? "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much": not a justified man merely, but a righteous man. The servants of Crete were exhorted to "adorn the doctrine of God." And how could such adorn it? Why, by obedience to their masters, and diligence in their work, and, as the Catechism says, by keeping their hands from picking and stealing, and their tongues from evil speaking - "not gainsaying, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity."

That their heathen masters, marking their conduct - watching them through the keyhole, perhaps, when alone in the room, with the cupboard open - might find that their lives were not governed by outward restraints, but by a secret principle of good within, and thus learn to praise the doctrine which could produce such results. They thus adorned the doctrine. It was not that the servant was valued because of his profession, but that his creed was valued because of his practice.

And praise will not be earned as cheaply in Christian England as it was in heathen Crete. The standard of public morality is higher; and keeping clear of the policeman will not avail to adorn the Gospel. It is not that the clerk does not forge cheques, but that he shows high Christian principle in husbanding the time his employer pays him for. It is not that the shopman does not rob the till, but that no reward or prospect of advancement will induce him to call bad good, or to trick a customer.

It is not that the Christian groom does not steal the oats, but that his master's horses are the best cared for in the parish. It is not that the Christian working-man does not scamp his work, but that he risks persecution and loss by insisting, in violation of trade-union rules, on working, not as a men-pleaser, but "with good will as to the Lord." In a word, one and all, their righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; for it is only by "showing all good fidelity" in things in which others fail, that the child of grace can be distinguished.

This is not truth for one class only; it is truth for all. It is the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." And how many a humble and dreary lot would be ennobled and gladdened if life were thus lived out to God, and even menial acts were done as to the Lord! The righteous living which grace enjoins is far more

than the absence of dishonesty. "Owe no man anything" is a precept which cannot be fulfilled by a cheque-book or a purse of sovereigns.

Grace is as ready to observe the rights of others, as to relinquish its own. It has nothing in common with socialism. But in our day the baneful principles of the Commune, which are leavening society, are perverting even the doctrine of Christ. The Lord of glory calls us "Brethren," "Friends"; the heart that grace has taught responds, "Master," "Lord." And so also in all the relationships of common life. Grace exacts homage from none, but is eager to render it wherever it is due.

The peer will claim the peasant as his brother; the peasant will reciprocate by paying all the deference which rank demands, especially when joined with worth and godliness. The same grace which teaches a man to pay money to whom money is due, teaches him, too, to "render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." Righteous living implies a careful observance of every relationship, and a careful discharge of every obligation.

And if Christians do not take heed to these things, when the present wave of blessing begins to ebb, and the world, cold-hearted but clear-headed, comes to take stock of the results, a reaction will set in against the loud profession of the day, and the worthy Name by which we are called will be blasphemed. This is not in keeping with the spirit of the age. But it pertains to "the things which befit wholesome teaching:" teaching which is little known in days when even the sublime precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are perverted to pander to a mawkishly unwholesome socialism, by which even true-hearted Christians are betrayed into conduct that is utterly un-Christian. (A friend of mine who began his business life in the office of Lord - , asked me once whether I thought he was justified as a Christian in raising his hat when he met his lordship. I answered, of course, that to be a Christian was higher than to be a gentleman, and that he was not even a gentleman if he omitted to do it.)

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GODLY LIFE

THE Christian is redeemed not merely from the penalties due to sin, but from the entire position to which those penalties attach. He is not in the position of a reprieved criminal; he has been "justified" - "justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," for he is made one with Him in His death. And death severs every relationship, puts an end to every obligation. But in maintaining without reserve or compromise that the Christian has been delivered from every responsibility as a child of nature, it behoves us to give equal prominence to the truth that he has new responsibilities as a child of grace, connected with the new position into which grace has brought him, and with the new relationships pertaining to that position.

He has been redeemed from law, but not that he may be lawless. He has been redeemed from duty, but not that he may be irresponsible. He has also been redeemed from that which made duty and law oppressive and fatal to him. He has not been redeemed from the penalties of doing his own will in order that self-will may have full scope; he has been redeemed from self-pleasing as well as from its consequences. "Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity" - that is, from all lawlessness, from all self-will.

Iniquity in its activities is the opposite of righteousness: essentially and in its fruits it is opposed to holiness. And holiness rightly understood is devotedness, or separation, to God. The holy man is not one

who shaves his face, puts on a cowl, and shuts himself up in a monastery, but one who "yields his members servants to righteousness." In appearance he is just like other people. If he be a barrister, he will be seen in court in a black gown and a horse-hair wig; if he be a footman, he may have powdered hair and an embroidered livery.

But in either case, if he be a holy man, his life is directed Godwards. It is not that the one is thinking about texts of Scripture when his duty to his client demands that he should be absorbed in Acts of Parliament, nor that the other is out preaching when he ought to be polishing the silver plate; but that both are men who may be trusted to do their duty to the best of their ability, for they are living before God, and not before men. Such are God's people. Not as a matter of profession, nor even as to title and privilege merely; but because they are "redeemed from all iniquity," from all self-pleasing, and thus "purified unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

"Yes," some one will here exclaim, "we are to be 'a peculiar people,' and this is quite opposed to what you have been saying." An illustrated copy of "The Pilgrim's Progress" was my favourite book in early childhood, and I was much impressed by the fact that the worldly people wore tall silk hats, while Christian and his friends had "wide-awakes." And one of the truest men I ever knew - a sensible and successful man of business - asked me once very earnestly whether I thought it was wrong for a Christian to wear evening dress!

My answer was to call his attention to the Apostle's words, "Whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, take account of these things." Where right and wrong are in question the Christian will not yield one iota to please anybody; but in matters of indifference he will be ready to please everybody. No matter how humble his station in life, the Christian ought to be gracious; for grace teaches people to be gracious, and any one who is thoroughly gracious has the essential characteristics which are intended by the term "a gentleman."

The "peculiar people" heresy has many phases and innumerable votaries. It often promotes conduct which is quite unbecoming a Christian, while it leads its dupes to think that in thus offending they are pleasing God. The expression is taken from the Greek version of Exodus xix. 5 :1 "All the earth is mine," God declared to Israel, "but ye shall be to me a peculiar people above all nations." And our English word, when rightly understood, is full of meaning, and none fitter or worthier could be chosen.

As Webster's Dictionary tells us, "peculiar is from the Roman peculium, which was a thing emphatically and distinctively one's own, and hence was dear." A single word sometimes contains a sermon. And what a sermon we have here! To be "a peculiar people" is not to be a queer people. Still less is it to be a people noted for ungraciousness or rudeness. It is to be "emphatically and distinctively" God's own people, and therefore to be very specially dear to Him. And surely God's own people must be the best people in the world for any place or any purpose.

Were Christians what they ought to be, the history of Daniel would, in a humble way, be re-enacted in the lives of thousands. If the captive Hebrew was promoted to the highest office at Babylon, it was because he proved his fitness for the position by sterling worth, and a life spent in the fear of God. And the result was that Daniel's God became known from one end of that mighty empire to the other. If Christians were known to be men of unswerving integrity, irreproachable in character and unblameable in life, their services would be at a premium in the world.

It was not always so. In many a time of bitter persecution the people of God were taught "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." But the age in which we live seems rather to be like the halcyon Pentecostal days when the disciples "had favour with all the people." Exceptions there are, no doubt, for some know what it means to suffer for Christ's sake, and others for righteousness' sake. But if all who name the name of Christ "departed from iniquity," men would "glorify their Father in heaven."

And it is to this end that we have been redeemed. And such are the present responsibilities of our standing in grace - responsibilities which are definite and real, and in respect of which account has to be rendered. In the recoil from the mediaeval error that this life is a state of probation of which the issue awaits the award of "the day of wrath," we are in danger of forgetting that the earthly life of the redeemed is indeed a probation, of which the result shall be declared at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Blinded by the errors from which they had been so recently delivered, our translators perverted the Apostle's words. The Revisers have rescued them for us thus: "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto Him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "What?" some one will exclaim, "Surely the good will be remembered and rewarded, but the bad thrust out of sight and hushed up for ever."

The words are explicit, "whether good or bad." How worthy it is of human nature that we should wish to have the good recalled and the bad forgotten! But, thank God! that worthy and blessed Name shall be vindicated from all the wrong that has been heaped upon it here, while all true service and godly living shall be rewarded to the full, to the praise of Him to whom the power belongs. For the anthem then shall be, as His people cast the crowns that He Himself has given at His feet, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the glory and the honour."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FEAR OF GOD

"THERE is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink." Such was the sad judgment upon life pronounced by one of the greatest of mankind. Philosopher and poet, philanthropist and statesman, and the kingliest king who ever wore a diadem, Solomon reasoned out the problem of life, and here was the conclusion he arrived at: "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink!" But is there nothing better than this for a creature who is to live through death into an eternity beyond?

Eternity! Here is the factor which changes the entire equation. And this affords the clue to the argument of the Book of Ecclesiastes - that wonderful treatise on the philosophy of life; so little read, so little understood. If the grave is to be the end of us, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The wise man will turn from the works of his hands and the projects of his brain, for "under the sun all is vanity and vexation of spirit." But let the veil be raised which shuts in life within this narrow span; let man realise that he has a destiny and a hope beyond the world through which he is passing here, and that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil"; and, as "the conclusion of the whole matter," all that is worth living for in life will be summed up in one word: "Fear God and keep His commandments."

"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments. Let no-one turn away from this, as though it savoured of legality unworthy of our liberty in Christ. Many people seem to

think that love has supplanted both obedience and the fear of the Lord. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," was the word of Christ. Not "the ten commandments" merely. It is not Sinai He is speaking of, but all that God has revealed to us.

Indeed, the error I am dealing with is but a natural recoil from the perverse folly which insists on claiming for "the ten commandments" a place in the Christian dispensation which they never possessed, and which, in the very nature of things, they never could possess, in any dispensation. "Every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God" is for our life, and the "commandments" of the 112th Psalm and the 14th chapter of John include all the "words" that God has given us.

"If a man love Me he will keep My words," the Lord repeated, and "he that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings." Love turns the "words" - the "sayings" - of the Lord into commandments, and is eager to prove itself by keeping them. But, it will be said, though love be consistent with commandments, surely it leaves no room for fear. And is not this the teaching of the Scripture which says: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love?"

The error here involved is one of many which depend on putting too narrow a meaning upon words. This word fear covers the entire range of emotions, from the dread with which the lost will flee from an offended God, to the reverence with which a true wife regards a husband worthy of her affection. The fear which springs from misgivings as to our relationships with God, or as to our fitness to approach Him, has no place in the heart which knows the love that has been revealed in Christ.

But fear, rightly understood, is the essential characteristic of godliness in every age - holy fear which springs from a due appreciation alike of the mercies, and of the majesty, of God. It is not His greatness only that evokes it, but His grace. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared," was the utterance of a heart that revelled in the deepest, closest fellowship with God. So also when David recounts the greatness and perfectness of his salvation, he adds, "Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Indeed, the Psalms, abounding as they do with the highest and truest experience of hearts brought nigh to God, are full of the fear of the Lord. It is the homage faith delights to render;

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-anderson/the-way/>

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