

The Negations of Christian Perfection

by Samuel Chadwick

The sermon emphasizes that Christian Perfection is not a life of negation, inhibition, and prohibition, but rather a life of positive freedom and love.

Scripture: Psalm 34:4, Matthew 12:18, Luke 1:74, Romans 8:1, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 6:14, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, James 3:2, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Holy Living"

Description

Samuel Chadwick preaches about the misconception that holiness is a religion of negation, inhibition, and prohibition, emphasizing that holiness is actually positive, freeing, and full of life in the Spirit. He explains that perfection is often described by the absence of certain qualities, as seen in the ministry of Jesus and the characteristics of heaven. Chadwick highlights that full salvation brings freedom from fear, care, and blame, leading to a life without anxiety, worry, or condemnation, filled with love, trust, and peace.

Transcript

One of the most common criticisms of Holiness is that it is a religion of negation, inhibition, and prohibition. These are not my words, and I have taken the trouble to look them up in the dictionary. The sense in which negation is used means the absence of certain qualities in anything. Inhibition is to restrain, to hold in, or keep back. Prohibition is to forbid, and implies the command of a superior authority. Taken together as a criticism, they complain that a life of holiness is made up chiefly of negatives, that it is a life of repression, and a series of things not to be done. The criticism is the opposite of the truth. It is not negative but positive, not restraint but freedom, not mechanism but life. Can anything be more positive than Love made Perfect? Can anything be more gloriously free than the liberty of an emancipated soul? Can anything be so free from the bondage of external authority or the mechanism of tyrannical rules as Life in the Spirit? Full Salvation fills up that which is lacking, gives fullness and spontaneity to all the resources of vitality and power, and lifts life above the legalism of systems and ordinances of the flesh. Salvation is full, present, and free.

NEGATIONS NOT NEGATIVE

I hesitated between the words negation and negative, but there is a difference between an absence and a denial. Light is the negation of darkness, but it does not deny its existence; and it is in this way that the perfect is described by the opposites which are not there. It is a familiar way of describing perfection in the Scriptures. The perfection of the Spirit-filled ministry of Jesus is described in terms of qualities that were

strikingly absent. "I have put my Spirit upon him. . . . He shall not strive, nor cry aloud, neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench" (Matt. 12:18-20). These characteristics are absent, because of the perfection of the opposites. The defects are excluded, because of the majestic perfection of His truth, humility, faith, and love. In the same way the Apostle James argues the perfection of the whole man from the absence of offense in speech: "If any man stumbleth not in word, the same man is a perfect man" (James 3:2). The glory of heaven is described in the same way. "They hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." No hunger; no thirst; no weariness; no tears! In the heavenly land there will be no curse, no night, no candle, no sun, no moon, and no temple. The perfection of glory is revealed by their absence. They are excluded, because they are incompatible. So it is in the Spirit-filled life. The negations, inhibitions, and prohibitions are not labels or bandages; they are incompatibles. St. Paul uses the five strongest words he can find, to set forth the incongruity of alliance and compromise with the world, the flesh, and the devil. What fellowship? What communion? What concord? What part? What agreement? "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6: 14-17). The perfection is known by the things not there.

NO FEAR

Full salvation saves from fear. It is amazing how the Lord seeks to save from fear. In the Old Testament and in the New He rebukes our fears, calls to courage, and promises peace. "Fear not, for I am with Thee." Zacharias proclaimed in the coming of the Messiah a gospel of holiness and righteousness, in which service should be without fear.

"To grant us that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74, 75). The enemies in the mind of Zacharias may have been the Romans, but he was a priest, and it was of other enemies he thought in the mission of the Messiah, or he would not have given such prominence to the holiness and righteousness to be lived before Him. Holiness is rightness of character, righteousness is the rightness of conduct. Before Him! Life is to be in His presence, acceptable to Him in thought, disposition, and desire, and approved in conduct, judgment, and speech. Without fear, because without condemnation.

"There is no fear in love" (1 John 4:18). Perfect love casteth out fear, and our love is made perfect in the indwelling of the God of love by the gift of His Spirit. No fear means the fullness of love and the perfection of trust. That is one of the negations of Love made perfect. Holiness is a life in which there is no fear. No fear! None whatever, of any kind, or any place? That is what no fear means. "I will fear no evil." I will trust in Him at all times. I will trust and not be afraid. If God be for us, with us, and in us, of whom and of what shall we be afraid? He undertakes supplies. He chooses our way, and guides our feet. He fights our battles, and makes us more than conquerors. He knows all things -- all about our needs, all about our temper and temperament, all about our lot, all about life, and all about death. He fills the heart with love, and asks implicitly for the trust in which there is no fear.

NO CARE

What a care-burdened world this is! Jesus summed up its need in the burden of unrest, and promised a heart free from care. The supreme gift of God in Christ is peace. He is the God of Peace, and the gift of Jesus is the peace of God. He not only gives the divine peace, but He keeps in perfect peace. What is perfect peace but peace without anxiety and without care? "Be anxious for nothing." That is the command

and promise of Jesus. The fully saved live without care. Just inside my study door is the word "Ataraxia" in letters of gold. It was the gift of a friend years ago after a sermon I had preached on the word. Nearly every stranger that comes asks what it means, and when I answer "Without care," they pause and say, "Ah, is it possible?" Yes, wherever the Spirit of God dwells in the heart, sanctifying, perfecting, filling, unto all the will of God. Business people sometimes hint that I should find it different if I were in business, but there are business men who have found the life that is radiant and without care. Often I am told that I should find it different if in these days I had sons and daughters, and that, I can imagine, would be quite likely; but they would be His as well as mine, and I cannot believe He would fail me. He never has failed. He cares, that I may be free from care. The children of God have no more right to worry, than they have to get drunk. In the Spirit-sanctified, Spirit-possessed, Spirit-strengthened, Spirit-perfected, there is no anxiety, no worry, no care. Blessed negation! Blessed inhibition! I ask no greater blessedness than the perfection supplied by such blessed absences.

NO BLAME

There are people who imagine that a life of full salvation pretends to be beyond need or capability of progress or improvement. It is really difficult to be patient with such stupidity, especially in those who are the accredited teachers and leaders of the Church. Christian Perfection is defined by its adjective. It is neither final nor flawless. It is a definite work of grace, by which the nature is cleansed of its bias to evil and is made to be partaker of the Divine nature. Every part is sanctified and made conformable to the Divine will. It does not make mistakes impossible or discipline unnecessary, but it does answer the prayer of the Apostle in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

Ye ransom'd sinners, hear,

The prisoners of the Lord,

And wait till Christ appear,

According to His word;

Rejoice in hope, rejoice with me,

We shall from all our sins be free.

In God we put our trust;

If we our sins confess,

Faithful He is, and just,

From all unrighteousness

To cleanse us all, both you and me;

We shall from all our sins be free.

Surely in us the hope

Of glory shall appear;
Sinners, your heads lift up,
And see redemption near;
Again I say, rejoice with me,
We shall from all our sins be free.
The word of God is sure,
And never can remove,
We shall in heart be pure,
And perfected in love;
Rejoice in hope, rejoice with me,
We shall from all our sins be free.

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