

## CHAPTER 15

### The Faithfulness of God

It is a good thing to give thanks unto Thee and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High, to show forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness every night. As Thy Son while on earth was loyal to Thee, His Heavenly Father, so now in heaven He is faithful to us, His earthly brethren; and in this knowledge we press on with every confident hope for all the years and centuries yet to come. Amen.

As emphasized earlier, God's attributes are not isolated traits of His character but facets of His unitary being. They are not things-in-themselves; they are, rather, thoughts by which we think of God aspects, of a perfect whole, names given to whatever we know to be true of the Godhead.

To have a correct understanding of the attributes it is necessary that we see them all as one. We can think of them separately but they cannot be separated. "All attributes assigned to God cannot differ in reality, by reason of the perfect simplicity of God, although we in divers ways use of God divers words," says Nicholas of Cusa. "Whence, although we attribute to God sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, sense, reason and intellect, and so forth, according to the divers significations of each word, yet in Him sight is not other than hearing, or tasting, or smelling, or touching, or feeling, or understanding. And so all theology is said to be established in a circle, because any one of His attributes is affirmed of another."

In studying any attribute, the essential oneness of all the attributes soon becomes apparent. We see, for instance, that if God is self-existent He must be also self-sufficient; and if He has power He, being infinite, must have all power. If He possesses knowledge, His infinitude assures us that He possesses all knowledge. Similarly, His immutability presuppose His faithfulness. If He is unchanging, it follows that He could not be unfaithful, since that would require Him to change.

Any failure within the divine character would argue imperfection and, since God is perfect, it could not occur. Thus the attributes explain each other and prove that they are but glimpses the mind enjoys of the absolutely perfect Godhead.

All of God's acts are consistent with all of His attributes. No attribute contradicts the other, but all harmonize and blend into each other in the infinite abyss of the Godhead. All that God does agrees with all that God is and being and doing are one in Him.

The familiar picture of God as often torn between His justice and His mercy is altogether false to the facts. To think of God as inclining first toward one and then toward another of His attributes is to imagine a God who is unsure of Himself, frustrated and emotionally unstable, which of course is to say that the one of whom we are thinking is not the true God at all but a weak, mental reflection of Him badly out of focus.

God being who He is, cannot cease to be what He is, and being what He is, He cannot act out of character with Himself. He is at once faithful and immutable, so all His words and acts must be and remain faithful. Men become unfaithful out of desire, fear, weakness, loss of interest, or because of some strong influence from without. Obviously none of these forces can affect God in any way. He is His own reason for all He is and does. He cannot be compelled from without, but ever speaks and acts from within Himself by His own sovereign will as it pleases Him.

I think it might be demonstrated that almost every heresy that has afflicted the church through the years has arisen from believing about God things that are not true, or from overemphasizing certain true things so as to obscure other things equally true. To magnify any attribute to the exclusion of another is to head straight for one of the dismal swamps of theology; and yet we are all constantly tempted to do just that.

For instance, the Bible teaches that God is love, some have interpreted this in such a way as virtually to deny that He is just, which the Bible also teaches. Other press the Biblical doctrine of God's goodness so far that it is made to contradict his holiness. Or they make His compassion cancel out His truth. Still others understand the sovereignty of God in a way that destroys or at least greatly diminishes His goodness and love.

We can hold a correct view of truth only by daring to believe everything God has said about Himself. It is a grave responsibility that a man takes upon himself when he seeks to edit out of God's self-revelation such features as he in his ignorance deems objectionable. Blindness in part must surely fall upon any of us presumptuous enough to attempt such a thing. And it is wholly uncalled for. We need not fear to let the truth stand as it is written. There is no conflict among the divine attributes. God's being is unitary. He cannot divide Himself and act at a given time from one of His attributes while the rest remain inactive. All that God is must accord with all that God does. Justice must be present in mercy, and love in judgment. And so with all the divine attributes.

The faithfulness of God is a datum of sound theology but to the believer it becomes far more than that: it passes through the processes of the understanding and goes on to become nourishing food for the soul. For the Scriptures not only teach truth, they show also its uses for mankind.

The inspired writers were men of like passion with us, dwelling in the midst of life. What they learned about God became to them a sword, a shield, a hammer; it became their life motivation, their good hope, and their confident expectation. From the objective facts of theology their hearts made how many thousand joyous deductions and personal applications! The Book of Psalms rings with glad thanksgiving for the faithfulness of God. The New Testament takes up the theme and celebrates the loyalty of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; and in the Apocalypse Christ is seen astride a white horse riding toward His triumph, and the names He bears are Faithful and True.

Christian song, too, celebrates the attributes of God, and among them the divine faithfulness. In our hymnody, at its best, the attributes become the wellspring from which flow rivers of joyous melody. Some old hymnbooks may yet be found in which the hymns have no names; a line in italics above each one indicates theme, and the worshiping heart cannot but rejoice in what it finds: "God's glorious perfections celebrated." "Wisdom, Majesty and goodness." "Omniscience." "Omnipotence and immutability." "Glory, mercy and grace." These are few samples taken from a hymnbook published 1849, but everyone familiar with Christian hymnody knows that the stream of sacred song takes its rise far back in the early years of the Church's existence. From the beginning belief in the perfection of God brought sweet assurance to believing men and taught the ages to sing.

Upon God's faithfulness rests our whole hope of future blessedness. Only as He is faithful will His covenants stand and His promises be honoured. Only as we have complete assurance that He is faithful may we live in peace and look forward with assurance to the life to come.

Every heart can make its own application of this and draw from it such conclusions as the truth suggests and its own needs bring into focus. The tempted, the anxious, the fearful, the discouraged may all find new hope and good cheer in the knowledge that our Heavenly Father is faithful. He will ever be true to His pledged word. The hard-pressed sons of the covenant may be sure that He will never remove His loving-kindness from them nor suffer His faithfulness to fail.

*Happy the man whose hopes rely  
On Israel's God; He made the sky, And earth and seas, with all their  
train; His truth forever stands secure;  
He saves the oppressed, He feeds the poor, And none shall find His  
promises vain. Isaac Watts*

## CHAPTER 16

### The Goodness of God

Do good in Thy good pleasure unto us, O Lord. Act toward us not as we deserve but as it becomes Thee, being the God Thou art. So shall we have nothing to fear in this world or in that which is to come. Amen.

The word good means so many things to so many persons that this brief study of the divine goodness begins with a definition. The meaning may be arrived at only by the use of a number of synonyms, going out from and returning by different paths to the same place.

When Christian theology says that God is good, it is not the same as saying that He is righteous or holy. The holiness of God is trumpeted from the heavens and re-echoed on earth by saints and sages wherever God has revealed Himself to men; however, we are not at this time considering His holiness but His goodness, which is quite another thing.

The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unfailing attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people.

That God is good is taught or implied on every page of the Bible and must be received as an article of faith as impregnable as the throne of God. It is a foundation stone for all sound thought about God and is necessary to moral sanity. To allow that God could be other than good is to deny the validity of all thought and end in the negation of every moral judgment. If God is not good, then there can be no distinction between kindness and cruelty, and heaven can be hell and hell, heaven.

The goodness of God is the drive behind all the blessings He daily bestows upon us. God created us because He felt good in His heart and He redeemed us for the same reason.

Julian of Norwich, who lived six hundred years ago, saw clearly that the ground of all blessedness is the goodness of God. Chapter six of her incredibly beautiful and perceptive little classic, *Revelations of Divine Love*, begins, "This showing was made to learn our souls to cleave wisely to the goodness of God." Then she lists some of the mighty deeds God has wrought in our behalf, and after each one she adds "of His goodness."

She saw that all our religious activities and every means of grace, however right and useful they may be, are nothing until we understand that the unmerited, spontaneous goodness of God is back of all arid underneath all His acts.

Divine goodness, as one of God's attributes, is self-caused, infinite, perfect, and eternal. Since God is immutable He never varies in the intensity of His loving-kindness. He has never been kinder than He now is, nor will He ever be less kind. He is no respecter of persons but makes His sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good, and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. The cause of His goodness is in Himself, the recipients of His goodness are all His beneficiaries without merit and without recompense.

With this agrees reason, and the moral wisdom that knows itself runs to acknowledge that there can be no merit in human conduct, not even in the purest and the best. Always God's goodness is the ground of our expectation. Repentance, though necessary, is not meritorious but a condition for receiving the gracious gift of pardon which God gives of His goodness.

Prayer is not itself meritorious. It lays God under no obligation nor puts Him in debt to any. He hears prayer because He is good, and for no other reason. Nor is faith meritorious; it is simply confidence in the goodness of God, and the lack of it is a reflection upon God's holy character.

The whole outlook of mankind might be changed if we could all believe that we dwell under a friendly sky and that the God of heaven, though exalted in power and majesty is eager to be friends with us.

But sin has made us timid and self-conscious, as well it might. Years of rebellion against God have bred in us, a fear that cannot be overcome in a day. The captured rebel does not enter willingly the presence of the king he has so long fought unsuccessfully to overthrow. But if he is truly penitent he may come, trusting only in the loving-kindness of his Lord, and the past will not be held against him. Meister Eckhart encourages us to remember that, when we return to God, even if our sins were as great in number as all mankind's put together, still God would not count them against us, but would have as much confidence in us as if we had never sinned.

Now someone who in spite of his past sins honestly wants to become reconciled to God may cautiously inquire, "If I come to God, how will He act toward me? What kind of disposition has He? What will I find Him to be like?" The answer is that He will be found to be exactly like Jesus. "He that hath seen me," said Jesus, "hath seen the Father."

Christ walked with men on earth that He might show them what God is like and make known the true nature of God to a race that had wrong ideas about Him. This was only one of the things He did while here in the flesh, but this He did with beautiful perfection. From Him we learn how God acts toward people. The hypocritical, the basically insincere, will find Him cold and aloof, as they once found Jesus; but the penitent will find Him merciful; the self-condemned will find Him generous and kind. To the frightened He is friendly, to the poor in spirit He is forgiving, to the ignorant, considerate; to the weak, gentle; to the stranger, hospitable.

By our own attitudes we may determine our reception by Him. Though the kindness of God is an infinite, overflowing fountain of cordiality, God will not force His attention upon us. If we would be welcomed as the Prodigal was, we must come as the Prodigal came; and when we so come, even though the Pharisees and the legalists sulk without, there will be a feast of welcome within, and music and dancing as the Father takes His child again to His heart. The greatness of God rouses fear within us, but His goodness encourages us not to be afraid of Him. To fear and not be afraid - that is the paradox of faith.

*O God, my hope, my heavenly rest, My all of happiness below,  
Grant my importunate request,  
To me, to me, Thy goodness show; Thy beatific face display,  
The brightness of eternal day.  
Before my faith's enlightened eyes, Make all Thy gracious goodness  
pass; Thy goodness is the sight I prize: might I see Thy smiling face:*

*They nature in my soul proclaim, Reveal Thy love, Thy glorious name.  
Charles Wesley*

## CHAPTER 17

### The Justice of God

Our Father, we love Thee for Thy justice. We acknowledge that Thy judgments are true and righteous altogether. Thy justice upholds the order of the universe and guarantees the safety of all who put their trust in Thee. We live because Thou art just - and merciful. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, righteous in all Thy ways and holy in all Thy works. Amen.

In the inspired Scriptures justice and righteousness are scarcely to be distinguished from each other. The same word in the original becomes in English justice or righteousness, almost, one would suspect, at the whim of the translator.

The Old Testament asserts God's justice in language clear and full, and as beautiful as may be found anywhere in the literature of mankind. When the destruction of Sodom was announced, Abraham interceded for the righteous within the city, reminding God that he knew He would act like Himself in the human emergency. "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

The concept of God held by the psalmists and prophets of Israel was that of an all-powerful ruler, high and lifted up, reigning in equity. "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Of the long-awaited Messiah it was prophesied that when He came He should judge the people with righteousness and the poor with judgment.

Holy men of tender compassion, outraged by the inequity of the world's rulers, prayed, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; a God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?" And this is to be understood not as a plea for personal vengeance but as a longing to see moral equity prevail in human society.

Such men as David and Daniel acknowledged their own un-righteousness in contrast to the righteousness of God, and as result their penitential prayers gained great power and effectiveness. "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces." And when the long-withheld judgment of God begins to fall upon the world, John sees the victorious saints standing upon a sea of glass mingled with fire. In their hands they hold harps of God; the song they sing is the song of Moses and the Lamb, and the theme of their song is the divine justice.

"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou alone art holy: for all nations I shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

Justice embodies the idea of moral equity, and iniquity is the exact opposite; it is inequity, the absence of equality from human thoughts and acts. Judgment is the application of equity to moral situations and may be favorable or unfavorable according to whether the one under examination has been equitable or inequitable in heart and conduct.

It is sometimes said, "Justice requires God to do this," referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle. If there were it would be superior to God, for only a superior power can compel obedience.

The truth is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree. All God's reasons come from within His uncreated being. Nothing has entered the being of God from eternity, nothing has been removed, and nothing has been changed.

Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more; and when God acts justly He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation. As gold is an element in itself and can never change nor compromise but is gold wherever it is found, so God is God, always, only, fully God, and can never be other than He is. Everything in the universe is good to the degree it conforms to the nature of God and evil as it fails to do so. God is His own self-existent principle of moral equity, and when He sentences evil men or rewards the righteous, He simply acts like Himself from within, uninfluenced by anything that is not Himself.

All this seems, but only seems, to destroy the hope of justification for the returning sinner. The Christian philosopher and saint, Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, sought a solution to the apparent contradiction between the justice and the mercy of God. "How dost Thou spare the wicked," he inquired of God, "if Thou art all just and supremely just?" Then he looked straight at God for the answer, for he knew that it lies in what God is.

Anselm's findings may be paraphrased this way: God's being is unitary; it is not composed of a number of parts working harmoniously, but simply one. There is nothing in His justice which forbids the exercise of His mercy. To think of God as we sometimes think of a court where a kindly judge, compelled by law sentences a man to death with tears and apologies, is to think in a manner wholly unworthy of the true God. God is never at cross-purposes with Himself. No attribute of God is in conflict with another. God's compassion flows out of His goodness, and goodness without justice is not goodness. God spares us because He is good, but He could not be good if He were not just. When God punishes the wicked, Anselm concludes, it is just because it is consistent with their deserts; and when He spares the wicked it is just because it is compatible with His goodness; so God does what becomes Him as the supremely good God. This is reason seeking to understand, not that it may believe but because it already believes.

A simpler and more familiar solution for the problem of how God can be just and still justify the unjust is found in the Christian doctrine of redemption. It is that, through the work of Christ in atonement, justice is not violated but satisfied when God spares a sinner. Redemptive theology teaches that mercy does not become effective toward a man until justice has done its work. The just penalty for sin was exacted when Christ our Substitute died for us on the cross. However unpleasant this may sound to the ear of the natural man, it has ever been sweet to the ear of faith. Millions have been morally and spiritually transformed by this message, have lived lives of great moral power, and died at last peacefully trusting in it.



This message of justice discharged and mercy operative is more than a pleasant theological theory; it announces a fact made necessary by our deep human need. Because of our sin we are all under sentence of death, a judgment which resulted when justice confronted our moral situation. When infinite equity encountered our chronic and willful in-equity, there was violent war between the two, a war which God won and must always win. But when the penitent sinner casts himself upon Christ for salvation, the moral situation is reversed. Justice confronts the changed situation and pronounces the believing man just.

Thus justice actually goes over to the side of God's trusting children. This is the meaning of those daring words of the apostle John: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But God's justice stands forever against the sinner in utter severity. The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions. It hushes their fears and allows them to practice all pleasant forms of iniquity while death draws every day nearer and the command to repent goes unregarded. As responsible moral beings we dare not so trifle with our eternal future.

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, With joy shall I lift up my head.  
Bold shall I stand in Thy great day; For who aught to my charge shall  
lay? Fully absolved through these I am  
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame. Count N. L. von Zinzendorf*

## CHAPTER 18

### The Mercy of God

Holy Father, Thy wisdom excites our admiration, Thy power fills us with fear, Thy omnipresence turns every spot of earth into holy ground; but how shall we thank Thee enough for Thy mercy which comes down to the lowest part of our need to give us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and for the spirit of heaviness a garment of praise?

We bless and magnify Thy mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

When through the blood of the everlasting covenant we children of the shadows reach at last our home in the light, we shall have a thousand strings to our harps, but the sweetest may well be the one tuned to sound forth most perfectly the mercy of God.

For what right will we have to be there? Did we not by our sins take part in that unholy rebellion which rashly sought to dethrone the glorious King of creation? And did we not in times past walk according to the course of this world, according to the evil prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience? And did we not all at once live in the lusts of our flesh? And were we not by nature the children of wrath, even as others?

But we who were one time enemies and alienated in our minds through wicked works shall then see God face to face and His name shall be in our foreheads. We who earned banishment shall enjoy communion; we who deserve the pains of hell shall know the bliss of heaven. And all through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us.

When all Thy mercies, O my God, My rising soul surveys, Transported with the view, I'm lost In wonder, love, and praise.

Joseph Addison

Mercy is an attribute of God, an infinite and inexhaustible energy within the divine nature which disposes God to be actively compassionate. Both the Old and the New Testaments proclaim the mercy of God, but the Old has more than four times as much to say about it as the New.

We should banish from our minds forever the common but erroneous notion that justice and judgment characterize the God of Israel, while mercy and grace belong to the Lord of the Church. Actually there is in principle no difference between the Old Testament and the New.

In the New Testament Scriptures there is a fuller development of redemptive truth, but one God speaks in both dispensations, and what He speaks agrees with what He is. Wherever and whenever God appears to men, He acts like Himself. Whether in the Garden of Eden or the Garden of Gethsemane, God is merciful as well as just.

He has always dealt in mercy with mankind and will always deal in justice when His mercy is despised. Thus He did in antediluvian times; thus when Christ walked among men; thus He is doing today and will continue always to do for no other reason than that He is God. If we could remember that the divine mercy is not a temporary mood but an attribute of God's eternal being, we would no longer fear that it will someday cease to be.

Mercy never began to be, but from eternity was; so it will never cease to be. It will never be more since it is itself infinite; and it will never be less because the infinite cannot suffer diminution. Nothing that has occurred or will occur in heaven or earth or hell can change the tender mercies of our God. Forever His mercy stands, a boundless, overwhelming immensity of divine pity and compassion.

As judgment is God's justice confronting moral inequity, so mercy is the goodness of God confronting human suffering and guilt. Were there no guilt in the world, no pain and no tears, God would yet be infinitely merciful; but His mercy might well remain hidden in His heart, unknown to the created universe.

No voice would be raised to celebrate the mercy of which none felt the need. It is human misery and sin that call forth the divine mercy.

"Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison!" the Church has pleaded through the centuries; but if I mistake not I hear in the voice of her pleading a note of sadness and despair. Her plaintive cry, so often repeated in that tone of resigned dejection, compels one to infer that she is praying for a boon she never actually expects to receive. She may go on dutifully to sing of the greatness of God and to recite the creed times beyond number, but her plea for mercy sounds like a forlorn hope and no more, as if mercy were a heavenly gift to be longed for but never really enjoyed.

Could our failure to capture the pure joy of mercy consciously experienced be the result of our unbelief or our ignorance, or both? It was so once in Israel. "I bear them record," Paul testified of Israel, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." They failed because there was at least one thing they did not know, one thing that would have made the difference.

And of Israel in the wilderness the Hebrew writer says, "But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." To receive mercy we must first know that God is merciful. And it is not enough to believe that He once showed mercy to Noah or Abraham or David and will again show mercy in some happy future day. We must believe that God's mercy is boundless, free and, through Jesus Christ our Lord, available to us now in our present situation.

We may plead for mercy for a lifetime in unbelief, and at the end of our days be still no more than sadly hopeful that we shall somewhere, sometime, receive it. This is to starve to death just outside the banquet hall in which we have been warmly invited.

Or we may, if we will, lay hold on the mercy of God by faith, enter the hall, and sit down with the bold and avid souls who will not allow diffidence and unbelief to keep them from the feast of fat things prepared for them.

*Arise, my soul, arise; Shake off thy guilty fears; The bleeding Sacrifice  
In my behalf appears:  
Before the throne my Surety stands, My name is written on His hands.  
My God is reconciled;  
His pardoning voice I hear: He owns me for His child;  
I can no longer fear:  
With confidence I now draw nigh, And "Father, Abba, Father," cry.  
Charles Wesley*

## CHAPTER 19

### The Grace of God

God of all grace, whose thoughts toward us are ever thoughts of peace and not of evil, give us hearts to believe that we are accepted in the Beloved; and give us minds to admire that perfection of moral wisdom which found a way to preserve the integrity of heaven and yet receive us there. We are astonished and marvel that one so holy and dread should invite us into Thy banqueting house and cause love to be the banner over us. We can not express the gratitude we feel, but look Thou on our hearts and read it there. Amen.

In God mercy and grace are one; but as they reach us they are seen as two, related but not identical.

As mercy is God's goodness confronting human misery and guilt, so grace is His goodness directed toward human debt and demerit. It is by His grace that God imputes merit where none previously existed and declares no debt to be where one had been before.

Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving. It is a self-existent principle inherent in the divine nature and appears to us as a self-caused propensity to pity the wretched, spare the guilty, welcome the outcast, and bring into favor those who were before under just disapprobation. Its use to us sinful men is to save us and to make us sit together in heavenly places to demonstrate to the ages the exceeding riches of God's kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

We benefit eternally by God's being just what He is. Because He is what He is, He lifts up our heads out of the prison house, changes our prison garments for royal robes, and makes us to eat bread continually before Him all the days of our lives.

Grace takes its rise far back in the heart of God, in the awful and incomprehensible abyss of His holy being; but the channel through which it flows out to men is Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. The apostle Paul, who beyond all others is the exponent of grace in redemption, never disassociates God's grace from God's crucified Son. Always in his teachings the two are found together, organically one and inseparable.

A full and fair summation of Paul's teaching on this subject is found in his Epistle to the Ephesians:

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, where in he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

John also in the Gospel that bears his name identifies Christ as the medium through which grace reaches mankind: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

But right here it is easy to miss the path and go far astray from the truth; and some have done this. They have compelled this verse to stand by itself, unrelated to other Scriptures bearing on the doctrine of grace, and have made it teach that Moses knew only law and Christ knows only grace. So the Old Testament is made to be a book of law and the New Testament a book of grace. The truth is quite otherwise.

The law was given to men through Moses, but it did not originate with Moses. It had existed in the heart of God from before the foundation of the world. On Mount Sinai it became the legal code for the nation of Israel; but the moral principles it embodies are eternal. There never was a time when the law did not represent the will of God for mankind nor a time when the violation of it did not bring its own penalty, though God was patient and sometimes “winked” at wrongdoing because of the ignorance of the people. Paul’s close-knit arguments in the third and fifth chapters of his Epistle to the Romans make this very clear.

The spring of Christian morality is the love of Christ, not the law of Moses; nevertheless there has been no abrogation of the principles of morality contained in the law. No privileged class exists exempt from that righteousness which the law enjoins.

The Old Testament is indeed a book of law, but not of law only. Before the great flood Noah “found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” and after the law was given God said to Moses, “Thou hast found grace in my sight.” And how could it be otherwise? God will always be Himself, and grace is an attribute of His holy being. He can no more hide His grace than the sun can hide its brightness. Men may flee from the sunlight to dark and musty caves of the earth, but they cannot put out the sun. So men may in any dispensation despise the grace of God, but they cannot extinguish it.

Had the Old Testament times been times of stern, unbending law alone the whole complexion of the early world would have been vastly less cheerful than we find it to be in the ancient writings. There could have been no Abraham, friend of God; no David, man after God’s own heart; no Samuel, no Isaiah, no Daniel. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews, that Westminster Abbey of the spiritually great of the Old Testament, would stand dark and tenantless. Grace made sainthood possible in Old Testament days just as it does today.

No one was ever saved other than by grace, from Abel to the present moment. Since mankind was banished from the east-ward Garden, none has ever returned to the divine favor except through the sheer goodness of God. And wherever grace found any man it was always by Jesus Christ. Grace indeed came by Jesus Christ, but it did not wait for His birth in the manger or His death on the cross before it became operative.

Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The first man in human history to be reinstated in the fellowship of God came through faith in Christ. In olden times men looked forward to Christ’s redeeming work; in later times they gaze back upon it, but always they came and they come by grace, through faith.

We must keep in mind also that the grace of God is infinite and eternal. As it had no beginning, so it can have no end, and being an attribute of God, it is as boundless as infinitude.

Instead of straining to comprehend this as a theological truth, it would be better and simpler to compare God’s grace with our need. We can never know the enormity of our sin, neither is it necessary that we should. What we can know is that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

To “abound” in sin: that is the worst and the most we could or can do. The word abound defines the limit of our finite abilities; and although we feel our iniquities rise over us like a mountain, the mountain, nevertheless, has definable boundaries: it is so large, so high, it weighs only this certain amount and no more. But who shall define the limitless grace of God? Its “much more” plunges our thoughts into infinitude and confounds them there. All thanks be to God for grace abounding.

We who feel ourselves alienated from the fellowship of God can now raise our discouraged heads and look up. Through the virtues of Christ's atoning death the cause of our banishment has been removed. We may return as the Prodigal returned, and be welcome. As we approach the Garden, our home before the Fall, the flaming sword is withdrawn. The keepers of the tree of life stand aside when they see a son of grace approaching.

*Return, O wanderer, now return,  
And seek thy Father's face;  
Those new desires which in thee burn  
Were kindled by His grace.  
Return, O wanderer, now return, And wipe the falling tear:  
Thy Father calls, - no longer mourn;  
'Tis love invites thee near  
William Benco Collyer*

## CHAPTER 20

### The Love of God

Our Father which art in heaven, we Thy children are often troubled in mind, hearing within us at once the affirmations of faith and the accusations of conscience. We are sure that there is in us nothing that could attract the love of One as holy and as just as Thou art. Yet Thou hast declared Thine unchanging love for us in Christ Jesus. If nothing in us can win Thy love, nothing in the universe can prevent Thee from loving us.

Thy love is uncaused and undeserved. Thou art Thyself the reason for the love wherewith we are loved. Help us to believe the intensity, the eternity of the love that has found us. Then love will cast out fear; and our troubled hearts will be at peace, trusting not in what we are but in what Thou hast declared Thyself to be. Amen.

The apostle John, by the Spirit, wrote, "God is love," and some have taken his words to be a definitive statement concerning the essential nature of God. This is a great error. John was by those words stating a fact, but he was not offering a definition.

Equating love with God is a major mistake which has produced much unsound religious philosophy and has brought forth a spate of vaporous poetry completely out of accord with the Holy Scriptures and altogether of another climate from that of historic Christianity.

Had the apostle declared that love is what God is, we would be forced to infer that God is what love is. If literally God is love, then literally love is God, and we are in all duty bound to worship love as the only God there is. If love is equal to God then God is only equal to love, and God and love are identical. Thus we destroy the concept of personality in God and deny outright all His attributes save one, and that one we substitute for God.

The God we have left is not the God of Israel; He is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; He is not the God of the prophets and the apostles; He is not the God of the saints and reformers and martyrs, nor yet the God of the theologians and hymnists of the church.

For our souls' sake we must learn to understand the Scriptures. We must escape the slavery of words and give loyal adherence to meanings instead. Words should express ideas, not originate them. We say that God is love; we say that God is light; we say that Christ is truth; and we mean the words to be understood in much the same way that words are understood when we say of a man, "He is kindness itself." By so saying we are not stating that kindness and the man are identical, and no one understands our words in that sense.

The words "God is love" mean that love is an essential attribute of God. Love is something true of God but it is not God. It expresses the way God is in His unitary being, as do the words holiness, justice, faithfulness and truth. Because God is immutable He always acts like Himself, and because He is a unity He never suspends one of His attributes in order to exercise another.

From God's other known attributes we may learn much about His love. We can know, for instance, that because God is self-existent, His love had no beginning; because He is eternal, His love can have no end; because He is infinite, it has no limit; because He is holy, it is the quintessence of all spotless purity; because He is immense, His love is an

incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea before which we kneel in joyful silence and from which the loftiest eloquence retreats confused and abashed.

Yet if we would know God and for other's sake tell what we know, we must try to speak of His love. All Christians have tried, but none has ever done it very well. I can no more do justice to that awesome and wonder-filled theme than a child can grasp a star. Still, by reaching toward the star the child may call attention to it and even indicate the direction one must look to see it. So, as I stretch my heart toward the high, shilling love of God, someone who has not before known about it may be encouraged to look up and have hope.

We do not know, and we may never know, what love is, but we can know how it manifests itself, and that is enough for us here. First we see it showing itself as good will. Love wills the good of all and never wills harm or evil to any. This explains the words of the apostle John: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."

Fear is the painful emotion that arises at the thought that we may be harmed or made to suffer. This fear persists while we are subject to the will of someone who does not desire our well-being. The moment we come under the protection of one of good will, fear is cast out. A child lost in a crowded store is full of fear because it sees the strangers around it as enemies. In its mother's arms a moment later all the terror subsides. The known good will of the mother casts out fear.

The world is full of enemies, and as long as we are subject to the possibility of harm from these enemies, fear is inevitable. The effort to conquer fear without removing the causes is altogether futile. The heart is wiser than the apostles of tranquillity. As long as we are in the hands of chance, as long as we look for hope to the law of averages, as long as we must trust for survival to our ability to outthink or outmaneuver the enemy, we have every good reason to be afraid. And fear hath torment.

To know that love is of God and to enter into the secret place leaning upon the arm of the Beloved - this and only this can cast out fear. Let a man become convinced that nothing can harm him and instantly for him all fear goes out of the universe. The nervous reflex, the natural revulsion to physical pain may be felt sometimes, but the deep torment of fear is gone forever.

God is love and God is sovereign. His love disposes Him to desire our everlasting welfare and His sovereignty enables Him to secure it. Nothing can hurt a good man.

The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still His kingdom is forever. Martin Luther God's love tells us that He is friendly and His Word assures us that He is our friend and wants us to be His friends. No man with a trace of humility would first think that he is a friend of God; but the idea did not originate with men. Abraham would never have said, "I am God's friend," but God Himself said that Abraham was His friend. The disciples might well have hesitated to claim friendship with Christ, but Christ said to them, "Ye are my friends."

Modesty may demur at so rash a thought, but audacious faith dares to believe the Word and claim friendship with God. We do God more honor by believing what He has said about Himself and having the courage to come boldly to the throne of grace than by hiding in self-conscious humility among the trees of the garden.

Love is also an emotional identification. It considers nothing its own but gives all freely to the object of its affection. We see this constantly in our world of men and women. A young mother, thin and tired, nurses at her breast a plump and healthy baby, and far



from complaining, the mother gazes down at her child with eyes shining with happiness and pride. Acts of self-sacrifice are common to love. Christ said of Himself,

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

It is a strange and beautiful eccentricity of the free God that He has allowed His heart to be emotionally identified with men. Self-sufficient as He is, He wants our love and will not be satisfied till He gets it. Free as He is, He has let His heart be bound to us forever. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. “For our soul is so specially loved of Him that is highest,” says Julian of Norwich, “that it overpasseth the knowing of all creatures: that is to say, there is no creature that is made that may know how much and how sweetly and how tenderly our Maker loveth us. And therefore we may with grace and His help stand in spiritual beholding, with everlasting marvel of this high, overpassing, inestimable Love that Almighty God hath to us of His Goodness.”

Another characteristic of love is that it takes pleasure in its object. God enjoys His creation. The apostle John says frankly that God’s purpose in creation was His own pleasure. God is happy in His love for all that He has made. We cannot miss the feeling of pleasure in God’s delighted references to His handiwork. Psalm 104 is a divinely inspired nature poem almost rhapsodic in its happiness, and the delight of God is felt throughout it.

“The glory of the Lord shall endure forever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works.”

The Lord takes peculiar pleasure in His saints. Many think of God as far removed, gloomy and mightily displeased with everything, gazing down in a mood of fixed apathy upon a world in which He has long ago lost interest; but this is to think erroneously. True, God hates sin and can never look with pleasure upon iniquity, but where men seek to do God’s will He responds in genuine affection.

Christ in His atonement has removed the bar to the divine fellowship. Now in Christ all believing souls are objects of God’s delight. “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”

According to the Book of Job, God’s work of creation was done to musical accompaniment. “Where wast thou,” God asks, “when I laid the foundations of the earth. . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” John Dryden carried the idea a bit further than this, but not, perhaps, too far to be true:

From harmony, from heavenly harmony, This universal frame began:

*When nature underneath a heap  
Of jarring atoms lay,  
And could not heave her head,  
The tuneful voice was heard from high,  
“Arise, ye more than dead!”  
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,  
In order to their stations leap,  
And Music’s power obey.  
From harmony, from heavenly harmony, This universal frame began:  
From harmony to harmony  
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,  
The diapason closing full in  
Man.  
From “A Song for St. Cecilia’s Day”*

Music is both an expression and a source of pleasure, and the pleasure that is purest and nearest to God is the pleasure of love.

Hell is a place of no pleasure because there is no love there. Heaven is full of music because it is the place where the pleasures of holy love abound. Earth is the place where the pleasures of love are mixed with pain, for sin is here, and hate and ill will. In such a world as ours love must sometimes suffer, as Christ suffered in giving Himself for His own. But we have the certain promise that the causes of sorrow will finally be abolished and the new face enjoy forever a world of selfless, perfect love.

It is of the nature of love that it cannot lie quiescent. It is active, creative, and benign. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." So it must be where love is; love must ever give to its own, whatever the cost. The apostles rebuked the young churches sharply because a few of their members had forgotten this and had allowed their love to spend itself in personal enjoyment while their brethren were in need. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" So wrote that John who has been known to the centuries as "the Beloved."

The love of God is one of the great realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal, intimate thing, too. God does not love populations, He loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end.

In Christian experience there is a highly satisfying love content that distinguishes it from all other religions and elevates it to heights far beyond even the purest and noblest philosophy. This love content is more than a thing; it is God Himself in the midst of His Church singing over His people. True Christian joy is the heart's harmonious response to the Lord's song of love.

*Thou hidden love of God, whose height, Whose depth unfathomed, no  
man knows, I see from far Thy beauteous light,  
Inly I sigh for Thy repose;  
My heart is pained, nor can it be At rest till it finds rest in Thee. Gerhard  
Tersteegen*

## CHAPTER 21

### The Holiness of God

Glory be to God on high. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, for Thy great glory. Lord, I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me which I knew not. I heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee and I abhor myself in dust and ashes. O Lord, I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.

But while I was musing the fire burned. Lord, I must speak of Thee, lest by my silence I offend against the generation of Thy children. Behold, Thou has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. O Lord, forsake me not. Let me show forth Thy strength unto this generation and Thy power to everyone that is to come. Raise up prophets and seers in Thy Church who shall magnify Thy glory and through Thine almighty Spirit restore to Thy people the knowledge of the holy. Amen.

The moral shock suffered by us through our mighty break with the high will of heaven has left us all with a permanent trauma affecting every part of our nature. There is disease both in ourselves and in our environment.

The sudden realization of his personal depravity came like a stroke from heaven upon the trembling heart of Isaiah at the moment when he had his revolutionary vision of the holiness of God. His pain-filled cry,

“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,” expresses the feeling of every man who has discovered himself under his disguises and has been confronted with an inward sight of the holy whiteness that is God. Such an experience cannot but be emotionally violent.

Until we have seen ourselves as God see us, we are not likely to be much disturbed over conditions around us as long as they do not get so far out of hand as to threaten our comfortable way of life. We have learned to live with unholiness and have come to look upon it as the natural and expected thing. We are not disappointed that we do not find all truth in our teachers of faith, fulness in our politicians or complete honesty in our merchants or full trustworthiness in our friends. That we may continue to exist we make such laws as are necessary to protect us from our fellow men and let it go at that.

Neither the writer nor the reader of these words is qualified to appreciate the holiness of God. Quite literally a new channel must be cut through the desert of our minds to allow the sweet waters of truth that will heal our great sickness to flow in. We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of.

God’s holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God’s power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine.

Only the Spirit of the Holy One can impart to the human spirit the knowledge of the holy. Yet as electric power flows only through a conductor, so the Spirit flows through truth and must find some measure of truth in the mind before He can illuminate the

heart. Faith wakes at the voice of truth but responds to no other sound. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Theological knowledge is the medium through which the Spirit flows into the human heart, yet there must be humble penitence in the heart before truth can produce faith. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth. It is possible to have same truth in the mind without having the Spirit in the heart, but it is never possible to have the Spirit apart from truth.

In his penetrating study of the holy, Rudolf Otto makes a strong case for the presence in the human mind of something he names the "numinous," by which, apparently, he means a sense that there is in the world a vague, incomprehensible Something, the *Mysterium Tremendum*, the awesome Mystery, surrounding and enfolding the universe. This is an It, an awful Thing, and can never be intellectually conceived, only sensed and felt in the depths of the human spirit. It remains as a permanent religious instinct, a feeling for that unnamed, undiscoverable Presence that "runs quicksilverlike through creation's veins" and sometimes stuns the mind by confronting it with a supernatural, suprarational manifestation of itself. The man thus confronted is brought down and overwhelmed and can only tremble and be silent.

This nonrational dread, this feeling for the uncreated Mystery in the world, is back of all religion. The pure religion of the Bible, no less than the basest animism of the naked tribesman, exists only because this basic instinct is present in human nature. Of course, the difference between the religion of an Isaiah or a Paul and that of the animist is that one has truth and the other has not; he has only the "numinous" instinct. He feels after an unknown God, but an Isaiah and a Paul have found the true God through His own self-disclosure in the inspired Scriptures.

The feeling for mystery, even for the Great Mystery, is basic in human nature and indispensable to religious faith, but it is not enough. Because of it men may whisper, "That awful Thing," but they do not cry, "Mine Holy One!" In the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures God carries forward His self-revelation and gives it personality and moral content. This awful Presence is shown to be not a Thing but a moral Being with all the warm qualities of genuine personality. More than this, He is the absolute quintessence of moral excellence, infinitely perfect in righteousness, purity, rectitude, and incomprehensible holiness. And in all this He is uncreated, self-sufficient and beyond the power of human thought to conceive or human speech to utter.

Through the self-revelation of God in the Scriptures and the illumination of the Holy Spirit the Christian gains everything and loses nothing. To his idea of God there are added the twin concepts of personality and moral character, but there remains the original sense of wonder and fear in the presence of the world-filling Mystery. Today his heart may leap up with the happy cry, "Abba Father, my Lord and my God!" Tomorrow he may kneel with the delighted trembling to admire and adore the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.

Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because He is holy, His attributes are holy; that is, whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy. God is holy and He has made holiness the moral condition necessary to the health of His universe. Sin's temporary presence in the world only accents this. Whatever is holy is healthy; evil is a moral sickness that must end ultimately in death. The formation of

the language itself suggests this, the English word holy deriving from the Anglo-Saxon halig, hal, meaning, "well, whole."

Since God's first concern for His universe is its moral health, that is, its holiness, whatever is contrary to this is necessarily under His eternal displeasure. To preserve His creation God must destroy whatever would destroy it. When He arises to put down iniquity and save the world from irreparable moral collapse, He is said to be angry. Every wrathful judgment in the history of the world has been a holy act of preservation. The holiness of God, the wrath of God, and the health of the creation are inseparably united. God's wrath is His utter intolerance of whatever degrades and destroys. He hates iniquity as a mother hates the polio that take the life of her child.

God is holy with an absolute holiness that knows no degrees, and this He cannot impart to His creatures. But there is a relative and contingent holiness which He shares with angels and seraphim in heaven and with redeemed men on earth as their preparation for heaven. This holiness God can and does impart to His children. He shares it with them by imputation and by impartation, and because He has made it available to them through the blood of the Lamb, He requires it of them. To Israel first and later to His Church God spoke, saying, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." He did not say "Be ye as holy as I am holy," for that would be to demand of us absolute holiness, something that belongs to God alone.

Before the uncreated fire of God's holiness angels veil their faces. Yea, the heavens are not clean, and the stars are not pure in His sight. No honest man can say "I am holy," but neither is any honest man willing to ignore the solemn words of the inspired writer, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Caught in this dilemma, what are we Christians to do? We must like Moses cover ourselves with faith and humility while we steal a quick look at the God whom no man can see and live. The broken and the contrite heart He will not despise. We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by. We must take refuge from God in God. Above all we must believe that God sees us perfect in His Son while He disciplines and chastens and purges us that we may be partakers of His holiness.

By faith and obedience, by constant meditation on the holiness of God, by loving righteousness and hating iniquity, by a growing acquaintance with the Spirit of holiness, we can acclimate ourselves to the fellowship of the saints on earth and prepare ourselves for the eternal companionship of God and the saints above. Thus, as they say when humble believers meet, we will have a heaven to go to heaven in.

*How dread are Thine eternal years, O everlasting Lord!  
By prostrate spirits day and night  
Incessantly adored!  
How beautiful, how beautiful  
The sight of Thee must be,  
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power, And awful purity!*

*Oh how I fear Thee, living God! With deepest, tenderest fears,  
And worship Thee with trembling hope, And penitential tears.*

Frederick W. Faber

## CHAPTER 23

### The Open Secret

When viewed from the perspective of eternity, the most critical need of this hour may well be that the Church should be brought back from her long Babylonian captivity and the name of God be glorified in her again as of old. Yet we must not think of the Church as an anonymous body, a mystical religious abstraction. We Christians are the Church and whatever we do is what the Church is doing. The matter, therefore, is for each of us a personal one. Any forward step in the Church must begin with the individual.

What can we plain Christians do to bring back the departed glory? Is there some secret we may learn? Is there a formula for personal revival we can apply to the present situation, to our own situation? The answer to these questions is yes.

Yet the answer may easily disappoint some persons, for it is anything but profound. I bring no esoteric cryptogram, no mystic code to be painfully deciphered. I appeal to no hidden law of the unconscious, no occult knowledge meant only for the few. The secret is an open one which the wayfaring man may read. It is simply the old and ever new counsel: Acquaint thyself with God. To regain her lost power the Church must see heaven opened and have a transforming vision of God.

But the God we must see is not the utilitarian God who is having such a run of popularity today, whose chief claim to men's attention is His ability to bring them success in their various undertakings and who for that reason is being cajoled and flattered by everyone who wants a favor. The God we must learn to know is the Majesty in the heavens, God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, the only wise God, our Saviour. He it is that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, who stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in, who bringeth out His starry host by number and calleth them all by name through the greatness of His power, who seeth the works of man as vanity, who putteth no confidence in princes and asks no counsel of kings.

Knowledge of such a Being cannot be gained by study alone. It comes by a wisdom the natural man knows nothing of, neither can know, because it is spiritually discerned. To know God is at once the easiest and the most difficult thing in the world. It is easy because the knowledge is not won by hard mental toil, but is something freely given. As sunlight falls free on the open field, so the knowledge of the holy God is a free gift to men who are open to receive it.

But this knowledge is difficult because there are conditions to be met and the obstinate nature of fallen man does not take kindly to them.

Let me present a brief summary of these conditions as taught by the Bible and repeated through the centuries by the holiest, sweetest saints the world has ever known:

First, we must forsake our sins. The belief that a holy God cannot be known by men of confirmed evil lives is not new to the Christian religion. The Hebrew book, The Wisdom of Solomon, which antedates Christianity by many years, has the following passage: "Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth: think of the Lord with a good heart, and in simplicity of heart seek him. For he will be found of them that tempt him not; and showeth himself unto such as do not distrust him. For forward thoughts separate from God and his power, when it is tried, reproveth the unwise. For unto a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject to sin. For

the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in.” This same thought is found in various sayings throughout the inspired Scriptures, the best known probably being the words of Christ, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

Second, there must be an utter committal of the whole life to Christ in faith. This is what it means to “believe in Christ.” It involves a volitional and emotional attachment to Him accompanied by a firm purpose to obey Him in all things. This requires that we keep His commandments, carry our cross, and love God and our fellow men.

Third, there must be a reckoning of ourselves to have died unto sin and to be alive unto God in Christ Jesus, followed by a throwing open of the entire personality to the inflow of the Holy Spirit. Then we must practice whatever self-discipline is required to walk in the Spirit, and trample under our feet the lusts of the flesh.

Fourth, we must boldly repudiate the cheap values of the fallen world and become completely detached in spirit from everything that unbelieving men set their hearts upon, allowing ourselves only the simplest enjoyments of nature which God has bestowed alike upon the just and the unjust.

Fifth, we must practice the art of long and loving meditation upon the majesty of God. This will take some effort, for the concept of majesty has all but disappeared from the human race. The focal point of man’s interest is now himself. Humanism in its various forms has displaced theology as the key to the understanding of life. When the nineteenth-century poet Swinburne wrote, “Glory to Man in the highest! for man is the master of things,” he gave to the modern world its new Te Deum. All this must be reversed by a deliberate act of the will and kept so by a patient effort of the mind.

God is a Person and can be known in increasing degrees of intimate acquaintance as we prepare our hearts for the wonder. It may be necessary for us to alter our former beliefs about God as the glory that gilds the Sacred Scriptures dawns over our interior lives. We may also need to break quietly and graciously with the lifeless textualism that prevails among the gospel churches, and to protest the frivolous character of much that passes for Christianity among us. By this we may for the time lose friends and gain a passing reputation for being holier-than-thou; but no man who permits the expectation of unpleasant consequences to influence him in a matter like this is fit for the kingdom of God.

Sixth, as the knowledge of God becomes more wonderful, greater service to our fellow men will become for us imperative. This blessed knowledge is not given to be enjoyed selfishly. The more perfectly we know God the more we will feel the desire to translate the new-found knowledge into deeds of mercy toward suffering humanity. The God who gave all to us will continue to give all through us as we come to know Him better.

Thus far we have considered the individual’s personal relation to God, but like the ointment of a man’s right hand, which by its fragrance “betrayeth itself”, any intensified knowledge of God will soon begin to affect those around us in the Christian community. And we must seek purposefully to share our increasing light with the fellow members of the household of God.

This we can best do by keeping the majesty of God in full focus in all our public services. Not only our private prayers should be filled with God, by our witnessing, our singing, our preaching, our writing should center around the Person of our holy, holy Lord and extol continually the greatness of His dignity and power. There is a glorified

Man on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven faithfully representing us there. We are left for a season among men; let us faithfully represent Him here.

Knowledge of the Holy – A.W. Tozer