

GRACIOUS LIVING

*Note: No formal Exposition  
of this text. It is used only  
as a "backdrop" for  
the sermon theme.  
- F.S.H.*

Text, Galatians 5.22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ..."

A lady whose family was dispossessed, and had to find a new home, was asked what success they had. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ She replied, "Well, we have had to go into an old barn of a house. We have plenty of room, and we can make ourselves fairly comfortable. But I had hoped that as our children grew up they might have <sup>an</sup> ~~some~~ opportunity to learn something of gracious living."

Just what did this lady mean? What is the real significance of "gracious living"? Does truly gracious living relate to the Divine Grace of which our Christian faith so constantly speaks?

This lady meant immediately something about the kind of house she would have liked her family to live in. She knew that a great mansion, like that erected by Gathergold in Hawthorne's immortal "Great Stone Face", can be utterly devoid of gracious living. And she knew just as well that such a little house as Robert Burns immortalized in "The Cotter's Saturday Night" can be full of wholesome and gracious living. But beyond these things, she knew that there can be a glorious matching of gracious living with a gracious house.

Who that has been privileged to grow up in a lovely and spacious old house will not remember it gratefully to his dying day? The very meaning of his life has been so worked into every fiber, brick, or stone of the old homestead, as to make it beloved beyond all other earthly possessions. And so it was with this lady: she had in mind much more than a house to live in.

Gracious living stands opposed to selfishness. Gathergold was an essential selfish and grasping man, and he was a stranger to gracious living. But how different is the picture in "The Cotter's Saturday Night". Two un-

selfish, hardworking parents hold the center of the stage. And their self-effacing graciousness comes out in all their children. Gracious living naturally bloomed within that meager little cabin's life. Such unselfishness inevitably works out in various ways.

For one thing, it demands room for mental expansion. Even the poor little cottage in the Scotland of Robert Burns matched its mental life with the broad expanse of the Holy Scriptures. In a gracious home there ~~must~~<sup>should</sup> be a place for books: tales of adventure, stories of men and of nations, forests of words in dictionaries, neatly plotted encyclopedias, books with sweeping theories and broad philosophical outlook.

Again, gracious living emphasizes the artistic tendencies. Even the Scottish cottage gave vent to its artistic cravings in the great old Scottish psalm-tunes, just as the Welsh mountains ring with a rich musical culture. This lady must have had the arts in mind when she expressed her craving for a home affording an opportunity for gracious living.

And then, gracious living must always find social expression. What a lively little place the Scottish cottage was on Saturday night, overflowing with high spirits, with fun, and with comparison of adventures throughout the preceding week. That house is best attuned to gracious living which carries with it a generous tradition of beautiful social life, sending its refreshing influence out into the whole countryside with which it has contact.

If unselfishness is the key to gracious living, the connection between Divine Grace and gracious living is clear. The humble piety of two Scottish parents, lost to selfishness in concern for their children, was wide open to the Divine Spirit. It kept a hard life from becoming harsh.

In our world today, struggling to find a way to live at peace, nothing is more essential than a baptism of Divine Grace, to take the hard grain of fear, envy, and avarice out of the life of mankind, and to throw our new order open to the only Spirit capable of opening the gates to worldwide gracious living.