



St Michael & All Angels, Chetwynd

The Collect for the Second Sunday after Trinity

(Book of Common Prayer)

O Lord, who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy stedfast fear and love: Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This prayer draws on the collect appointed by the Sarum Missal for this Sunday, and it features in the older Gelasian Sacramentary. 1549 saw a fairly literal translation into English, but that version was in 1662 reconstructed and expanded into its current form. God's "Name" refers to the whole nature and being of God, as it does in Scripture; and "providence" means God's protective care. We are to have a "fear and love" of God; and that pair of words appears like bookends near the start and at the end of the prayer.

We noted the characteristic use of monosyllabic words in the collects last week, and this collect uses several of them too, including that phrase "fear and love", a much stronger phrase than "*fear and charity*" would have been. Perhaps we have William Tyndale (c1494-1536), original translator of the New Testament from Greek into English, for this choice of "love". He knew the power and clarity of such short words, and he often gained a memorable staccato effect with them, as in the case of his "ask, seek, knock" in Matthew 7:7 and Luke 11:9, and also of "faith, hope and love" in 1 Corinthians 13. In this second trio, it would have been possible to use the word "charity", matching the three-syllable word in the underlying Greek text. Contemporaries like Thomas Moore were appalled that he should use the four-letter word love, instead of charity. The King James Version of the Bible (1603) drew on Tyndale almost word for word in 1 Corinthians 13, but replaced "love" with the safer-sounding "charity", spoiling the cumulative impact of the three short words. The tamer "charity" conveyed affection and benevolence, but avoided the passion and strong feeling imparted by "love". But Tyndale wanted the passion, surely recognising the obvious passion with which St Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.

If praying to love God requires us to engage our feelings, so does our praying to fear him. Here, as in many passages of Scripture and in the Book of Common Prayer, to fear means to hold in reverence with awe and wonder. The simple word fear in this context therefore has a rich and full meaning.

However, I do not think we can altogether avoid the frisson that the day-to-day meaning of the word fear can transmit; for *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Hebrews 10:31).

James Graham

June 2026