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"The Oberlin Evangelist"

Publication of Oberlin College

Sermons and Lectures given in 1845

by

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GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

The Sin of Fretfulness

Lecture I

January 15, 1845

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Ps. 37:1: "Fret not thyself because of evil doers."

Fretfulness is a state of mind the opposite of that meekness and patient endurance which the gospel enjoins on all.

In discoursing from these words, I shall show--

I. Why we should not fret because of evil doers.

II. How to avoid it.

I. Why we should not fret.

- 1. Because, in fretting at the evil doing of others we do evil ourselves. Many persons seem to think that they do well to fret when others sin: for as much as they think it is meet to manifest holy indignation and zeal for the Lord of Hosts; and would say with Jonah, I do well to be angry. But such persons ought to remember, that in fretting at others for their sins, they are abusing God themselves. And surely this is a good reason why they should abstain from fretting, if by so doing, they are but adding sin of their own to that of the individual on account of whose sins they fret.
- 2. Another reason why we should not fret because of evil doers is, that it will do no good. It certainly can do us no good to fret. It cannot benefit him at whom we fret. It does not tend to the glory of God, nor in any way to the advancement of His kingdom. Why then should we fret?
- 3. The third reason why we should not fret because of evil doers is, that it will only add

mischief to mischief. It will do us great evil; it will destroy our own peace; it will break up our communion with God; it will quench the spirit of prayer in our own hearts; it will bring us into condemnation; it will destroy our confidence in God, and destroy our respect for ourselves; it will in every way tend to the injury of our own souls.

Again, it will do great evil to others. It tends greatly to the injury of the one at whom we fret, and but exasperates and tends to make him fret in return. It has no tendency to reform his heart, but rather to aggravate his wickedness.

Again, it tends to the injury of all who witness our fretting. It is a stumbling block to them. And perhaps our fretting is a greater stumbling block to them than the evil doing of those at whom we fret. Fretting at the evil doing of others tends only to mischief. It is dishonorable to God, and a manifest want of confidence in Him. It tends in every way to the injury of His kingdom.

- 4. If we manifest a sweet and patient spirit towards evil doers, it tends greatly to do them good. It also tends greatly to prevent the harm of their evil doing. If when they do evil we do well, and manifest a Christian spirit, our Christian temper, in some measure at least, is a set off against their evil doing. If they dishonor God by evil doing, and we highly honor Him by the manifestation of a heavenly temper, we do all we can to retrieve the injury done to the kingdom of God by the evil-doer. His evil doing tends to stumble those around him--our well doing in manifesting a heavenly temper tends to the removal of the stumbling block. Bystanders will say, to be sure here is one that has done a great evil, but another has manifested so excellent a spirit in view of it, as on the whole to strengthen my conviction of the necessity and excellence of the religion of Jesus.
- 5. Another reason why we should not fret is, that the evil doing is suffered to occur under the providence of infinite wisdom and love. God has chosen not to prevent it, but on the contrary to suffer it rather than to change the administration of His government, in such a manner as to prevent its occurrence. God has looked upon it as the least of two evils; and we ought to consider that no evil is done which could have been wisely prevented. No evil exists under the government of God but what is suffered as the less of two evils. That which daily occurs is permitted in order to prevent greater evil; and on the whole, it was wise and benevolent to suffer that thing to occur rather than to have interfered for its prevention. Why then should we fret about it?
- 6. Another good reason why we should not fret at evil doing is, because provision is made to overrule it for the glory of God and the highest good of His kingdom. "The wrath of man shall praise Thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." All the evil in the universe has been taken into account in the great plan of God for the promotion of the highest good of bring. He saw that in the wisest possible moral system all evil could not be prevented: consequently what He could not wisely prevent He overruled for His own glory. We can easily see in a great many instances, how God does overrule, as a matter of fact, the most flagrant transgressions for the promotion of His glory. Take the conduct of Judas in betraying Christ, and the wickedness of Satan in that affair. These were among the most flagrant transgressions the world ever saw, and yet they were instrumental in laying the cornerstone of man's salvation. God has taken

occasion from these transgressions highly to honor Himself and to benefit the universe. Now although we cannot see the particular manner in which God does this in every instance, yet we may rest assured that every sin that ever does occur or ever can occur shall in some way be overruled for the promotion of the glory of God. No thanks to the sinner. He intended no such thing. He is perfectly free and responsible, and deserves to be punished just as much as though there were no overruling providence to bring good out of his intended evil. But the fact that it will be thus overruled, is a substantial reason why we should not fret about it.

- 7. Another reason is, it is Satan's object to make us fret. He understands very well the injury that we shall receive from it ourselves, and the great evil of fretting to the government of God. He is an enemy to human happiness, and loves to disturb our peace. He loves to stumble others and to see God dishonored; and understands full well that few things are more hateful in the sight of God and destructive to all good than fretting. It is therefore a prime object with him to promote as much fretfulness as possible. But shall we gratify the devil?
- 8. Another reason why we should not fret is, that the very evil doing at which we fret, is often allowed in providence, as one of the means of perfecting in us the grace of patience. Mother, did you ever consider that the trying conduct of your children is often designed to perfect the grace of patience in your soul? The Apostle says--"Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience: let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." The things at which we are so prone to fret all occur under the government of God, and are all parts of those means which God is using to perfect holiness within us.
- 9. The evil doing of others affords a good opportunity to glorify God. If in view of the evil doing of others, we manifest a God-like temper, this is highly honorable to God. What can be more lively than for a man under severe trials, to manifest the temper of Christ? When did Christ Himself ever shine more gloriously than under His severest trials? The temper which He manifested, was more glorious to God, and reflected more of the divine beauty of His character, than was manifested perhaps under any other circumstances. So when we are greatly tried with the evil doing of others, God has given us an opportunity of manifesting most of the divine temper to the world around us.
- 10. It evinces unbelief to fret. If we but realize that the hand of God is concerned directly or indirectly in everything that occurs; if we but firmly believe this, we shall not fret at the occurrences around us. No man who practically believes in the universal providence of God, will fret at the occurrences around him any more than he would fret at God Himself. He will perceive that fretting at these occurrences, is but fretting at God, and that scolding because of this evil doing, is virtually scolding at God. It is certain that God is in some way concerned in everything that occurs. Not so concerned, as to diminish in the least, the blame worthiness of the evil doer; but yet so concerned in it, that in a sense, God has done it. "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" "I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." I know that people very little realize that they are fretting at God Himself, when they are fretting at His providence, yet such is the fact, and but for their unbelief, they would at once perceive it.

- 11. Fretfulness is an expression of self-will. No man frets at what occurs around him, if his will is swallowed up in the will of God. If a man has a will of his own, and is set on having his own way, he will fret at anything that crosses his path, and opposes his inclinations. But if his will is lost in the will of God, he will recognize the universal providence of God, and having no will of his own, he will sweetly submit to all the Providences around him. He will blame the sinner and justify God, in suffering the evil doing rather than preventing it. He will look on it as something which has been permitted for wise and benevolent reasons, and will consider it highly absurd for him to fret at anything which occurs under the providence of the infinitely wise and benevolent God.
- 12. It is un-Godlike to fret at evil doers. God never frets, and why should we fret? And yet it concerns Him rather than ourselves, to resent wickedness. If anybody is injured vengeance belongs to Him, and not to us. But if He has good reasons for not fretting at what occurs, surely we need not fret about it. For it concerns Him infinitely more than it does us. When any trial falls in our way, we should always ask ourselves, now what is God's state of mind in view of this thing? Does He get out of patience, and suffer Himself to fret? Who would not be shocked at the idea of God's fretting at anything that occurs? Why then, should we fret?
- 13. Fretting destroys our own peace. Who does not know that the indulgence of the least fretfulness instantly breaks up the peace of our minds, brings a cloud over our spirits, and throws our souls into darkness? What Christian does not know this by his own experience? It is remarkable how easily our peace is destroyed. The least rising of impatience if indulged but for a moment, brings the spirit into rough waters, stirs up the sediment, and makes it for the time, like the troubled sea.
- 14. Fretting is also destructive to the peace of others. A fretful man is a great nuisance to all around him. Fretting seems to be contagious. If parents fret at their children, the children are almost certain to fret in return. If husbands fret at their wives, or wives at their husbands, the other is almost certain to fret in return, and thus the peace of a whole household will be continually destroyed by the wickedness of one fretful member.
- 15. Fretting grieves the Holy Spirit. He will not live where there is a fretful spirit. We are shocked and grieved if we go to a neighbor's house and find them in a fret. We feel embarrassed and uneasy, and if we find them out of humor, we retire in distress and disgust. And will not the Holy Spirit be grieved away and retire from us, if we suffer ourselves to fret in His presence?
- 16. It is destructive to our influence to fret. A fretful person can have very little Christian influence in any community. A fretful parent never governs his family well. A fretful minister, a fretful neighbor, in short, anyone that frets, destroys his Christian influence.

The common sense of mankind teaches them that fretting is the opposite of a Christian temper. And no man can have much confidence in the piety of another who is in the habit of indulging fretfulness. Many a professed Christian parent has lost all Christian influence over his own household, by indulging in this sin. Visit any family you please, where the parents, either or both of them are professors, and are in the habit of fretting, and as a general rule, you will find their children unconverted. The family have been

stumbled by them, and they remain in their sins.

It destroys man's influence with God, to fret. A fretful professor of religion can never prevail with God in prayer. The whole influence of a man's prayers, and exertions, and labors to convert others, will be lost on them, if he is known by them to indulge in fretfulness.

- 17. Indulgence in this sin, compels others to abhor us. Scarce anything is more hateful than fretting. And our nature is such, that although we may pity fretful persons, yet we cannot but abhor them. God both pities and abhors them, as He pities and abhors the devil. A mother who frets at her children, is never beloved by them. A fretful father is never loved by his family, but always secretly hated. A fretful husband or wife is never loved by the other party. If a man has a wife who is in the habit of fretting, he will find in time, that he neither respects nor loves her. Although he may be benevolent towards her, yet he cannot regard her with complacent love, but secretly loathes her, on account of her fretful temper. It is just so with the wife. If she has a fretful husband, she may fear him, she may pity him, but with complacency she cannot love him.
- 18. Fretting compels others to dread our presence. The presence of a fretful person is always to be dreaded. Scarcely anything is more annoying and loathsome than a fretful spirit. The children always dread the presence of a fretful father or mother, or of a fretful brother or sister; insomuch that if a fretful member of the family is away from home, his return is secretly dreaded.
- 19. Another reason why we should not fret is, God will take care of the evil doers. The verse immediately following the text, says: "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." They are in the hands of God. He will take care so to dispose of them, as to promote His own glory. We need not therefore fret ourselves because of their evil doings.

But again, their evil doing is of but short continuance. The verse just quoted, says: "they shall soon be cut down like the grass." The triumphing of the wicked is short, and his evil doing in this life is but for a moment. God will remove him just as soon as He sees it wise to do so. When He can no longer overrule his wickedness to promote the general good, He will cut him off and put him out of the way. We often wonder why evil doers live so long, and are suffered through so many years to provoke the majesty of God, and to scatter fire-brands, arrows, and death through the world. But we have no reason to wonder at this, for God sees the end from the beginning, and suffers them to live and do evil just so long as He can make their evil conduce in some way to some good, and no longer. And should they live a thousand times as long as they do, and do a thousand times as much mischief as they do, this would be no reason why we should fret, for God will husband the whole matter in a manner promotive of the highest good of beings.

- 20. Another reason why we should not fret at evil doers, is because they are among the "all things that work together for good to them that fear God." How often can we see that the trials into which we fall, the temptations of Satan, and the wickedness of men around us, are working together on the whole, for our edification and growth in grace. We thus learn many lessons

which we could learn in no other way. What Christian has not thanked God for making Satan in many instances so useful to him? Or if Christians have not done this, what Christian has not reason to do it? I can plainly see that from my greatest trials, I have often learned the most useful lessons of my life. And I have often been led to thank God for all the abuses and temptations of wicked men and devils.

- 21. Another reason why we should not fret is, the things at which we fret, are not worth fretting about. By this I do not mean that the sins of evil doers are not great and grievous sins, and in themselves greatly to be hated and deplored; but I mean that on the whole, considering the overruling providence of God and all the circumstances of the case, they are not worth fretting about. Did we see the end from the beginning as God sees, we should no doubt see this to be true. If they were worth fretting about, God would fret about them. But if He is perfectly calm and unruffled by them, if He has no good reasons for impatience and fretfulness in view of them, we may rest assured that there is no reason why we should fret at them.
- 22. The last reason I will mention is, that fretting makes us the very sport of Satan. Indulging fretfulness gives it all the power of habit, and when once the habit of fretting is formed, Satan is almost sure of his prey. He knows full well, that at any time he can seduce us from our steadfastness, and bring us into bondage. And such an enemy is he to our peace, and to our souls, as to take an infernal satisfaction in spending his leisure hours in causing us to fret. He loves to throw us into a tempest of fretfulness, and then tell it in hell, and excite a laugh in the infernal regions, at the fact that we profess religion, and yet are so easily provoked to fretfulness.

II. I come now to show, how to avoid fretfulness.

- 1. Sink into the will of God. Acknowledge and consider the universal providence of God. And know, that He is working all things after the counsel of His own will. Sink therefore into His will and learn to be sweetly and universally submissive. This is a sure antidote against fretfulness.
- 2. Have faith in the wisdom and benevolence of the providences of God. Settle down with your whole soul on the truth that everything that does or can occur, occurs under the direct or indirect control of infinite wisdom and benevolence. Let this be settled as an omnipresent truth, stable as the foundations of the universe, that nothing ever did, or ever will occur in the universe of God, that is not suffered, and in some sense brought about by the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness; that all this is perfectly consistent with the liberty and blame-worthiness of evil doers.
- 3. Be self-possessed. It is of great importance to cultivate the habit of being calm and self-possessed, under the various trials with which we are surrounded. It is often important not to suffer yourself to speak a word till you have had time to think, and lift up your heart to God in prayer. Sometimes when I have felt it a duty to say something (to a person of an irritable temper) which I feared might induce fretfulness, I have found it useful to preface what I had to say with the request that he would not answer a word, nor speak on the subject, till he had had time for reflection and prayer. In such cases it is observable that persons will seldom fret when

they come afterwards to converse upon it. Whereas had they made immediate reply, they would probably have been overcome by their temper.

Christian parents would often find it useful when they have anything to communicate to their children which they know will be a great trial to them, to request them before they make the announcement not at the time to make any reply, and even obtain a promise from them, that until they have had time for reflection and prayer they will not say a word. By being self-possessed I mean that a person should cultivate the habit of considering the reasons why they should not be irritated by circumstances around them.

- 4. Another excellent antidote against fretting is, duly and habitually consider the aggravation of your own faults. No man frets at the faults of others who duly considers his own. Only be well aware at all times, of what your own character and faults have been, and it will teach you to be very compassionate and considerate with respect to fretting at the faults of others.
- 5. Reflect much also upon the forbearance of God. I love to consider the infinite calmness of the divine mind, in view of all the provocations which He has to anger. His infinite patience, long-suffering and kindness to evil doers, is what I love to consider. It is of great importance to all Christians to habituate themselves to deep reflection upon the divine character and conduct in this respect.
- 6. Reflect much on the meekness, forbearance, and long-suffering of Christ.

Nothing is more calculated to prevent or subdue a fretful spirit, than to inquire how would Christ behave under these circumstances. Under all the abuse which wicked men and devils heaped upon Him, He was never known in the least degree to fret. And how would His apostles have been shocked had they at any time witnessed impatience in Him! And how must they have admired and adored the sweetness of His temper, His meekness and long-suffering in the midst of all His trials; His kind and compassionate treatment of His greatest enemies. And when they heard Him on the cross praying for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," how could anything prevent their fretting at evil doers, if the remembrance of this temper in Christ would not do it?

- 7. Avoid all undue excitement as far as possible.

We are too apt to imagine that religion consists in highly excited emotion and feeling. Whereas it consists altogether in the state of the heart or will. A highly excited state of the sensibility is often a very dangerous state. Cultivate therefore as far as possible a spirit of calmness, if you would avoid fretting. I have always observed in myself and others, that when highly excited even on the subject of religion, the feelings are easily diverted into a wrong channel. God's mind is calm. Christ generally manifested great calmness of mind; and what Christian is there who does not know that when he is most sunk into the will of God, and is most truly religious and consecrated to God, his mind is most like a sea of love, calm like the heart of God. See the Christian on a death bed, lying at the very gate of heaven. See the calmness of the countenance, the mildness of the eye, the sweetness and calmness of the temper, the even balance of the pulse; everything bespeaks a mind

full of holy calmness. Cultivate that state of mind, it is a great antidote against fretting.

- 8. Learn not to look altogether on the dark side of things; consider the virtues as well as the vices of those around you. Dwell on the good and not altogether on the bad qualities of those with whom you associate. It is a dangerous thing for us to dwell too much on the evil doings of those around us. I have often been struck with the tendencies of certain minds, and the results of certain courses of conduct. Many of the Adventists and other come-outers and radicals of the present day, seem to be taken up altogether with considering the great wickedness of the church and of the world; and this has manifestly led them away from God. Great multitudes of them seem not at all to be aware of it, but as sure as they are ever saved, just so sure must they come to a knowledge of the fact that they have fallen away from God. And if I am not entirely mistaken, the way in which they have fallen, has been by considering so exclusively the wickedness of the world and church, as finally to get into the spirit of anathematizing both. Said a good brother who had been acquainted with one of the principal defenders of the doctrine of Annihilation--"Until I saw him I could not understand how he came to fall into that error, but when I heard him preach I understood it. It was manifest that he had the spirit of annihilation in him. He seemed to see nothing but the dark side of the picture; and the evils that were in the world seemed to engross his thought." Now let me say this is a dangerous and wicked state of mind, and if you would avoid fretting, learn to look on the bright side of the picture, and see the good that is in the world, and learn what God is doing to promote the happiness and holiness of man. Consider the virtues of those around you and whatever is praiseworthy. Understand what Paul says in Phillipians 4:8, "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if these be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things."
- 9. Make due allowances for the circumstances, education, &c., of evil doers. Considering the circumstances under which they act, their want of light, and many other things oftentimes greatly moderate the tendencies of their conduct to make us fret.
- 10. Remember that it is God and not you against whom sin is committed. The government of the universe is not committed to you. The kingdom is the Lord's--all things are His. He has made all things for Himself--even the wicked for the day of evil; and you need not by any means take on yourself the responsibility of managing His affairs, nor suffer yourselves to fret because things do not go as you would have them. He will take care to secure the ends of His own government, without your getting into a passion about it.
- 11. Don't suffer yourselves to dwell much in thought on the evil doings of those around you. If you are abused don't dwell on it. Pray for the evil doer and dismiss it from your thoughts, lest it be to you too great a temptation.
- 12. Pray for evil doers. You never can fret at a man for whom you are sincerely and earnestly praying. Fretting at an evil doer and earnestly praying for him, are things inconsistent with each other.
- 13. Labor to save their souls, and cultivate compassion toward them. If you are deeply engaged in pulling them out of the fire, if you are exercised with great love and compassion for their

souls, you will not be apt to fret at them.

- 14. Beware of trusting to mere resolutions made in your own strength, that you will not fret. Such resolutions are as good as air. They promise much in the absence of temptation, but are of no value at all in the time of trial.
- 15. Reflect on the wickedness of fretting at evil doers. Consider how absurd and wicked it is for you to add sin to sin. How ridiculous it is because another sins, for you to get mad about it, and thus perhaps commit a sin of a more aggravated character than that about which you fret.
- 16. Realize the uselessness of fretting. Do but consider that it is of no use at all for you to fret.
- 17. Also consider the great evil of it. It is only making matters worse; for what will those around you say? This surely: "One man has committed an evil and others are fretting about it." And thus the last evil is worse than the first.
- 18. Consider what an excellent opportunity it affords you of honoring God. Consider that the greater the provocation the more highly may you honor God by manifesting a right spirit. This is what God does. The more provoking the conduct of His enemies is, by so much the more does He take occasion to honor Himself by the exhibition of a proper spirit in view of it. If their sin is great, His patience and forbearance are shown to be equal to the trial, and remain calm. Now consider that when evil doers do the worst they can, it afford you the most excellent opportunity of exhibiting the spirit and temper of Christ. If you do so, you will honor God more highly by how much the more provoking and outrageous is the conduct of evil doers. If you will take this view of the subject, surely you will not fret, but rather praise the Lord for these opportunities to glorify His name.
- 19. Consider the comparative lightness of your trials after all--what they amount to when compared with the trials which Christ, and the Apostles and martyrs have had. Their admirable spirit under these trials, was the most convincing argument that could be used in favor of the religion of Christ. Now what are your trials compared with theirs?
- 20. Labor to improve these trials to the glory of God. As I have just said, they afford you an excellent opportunity for doing so. Now make up your mind that by the strength of God and by His grace, you will improve these occasions to His glory.
- 21. Labor and pray for such a development of the sensibility, such calmness, meekness and quietness of spirit as shall enable you on all occasions to possess your soul in patience.
- 22. Consider the declared design of these trials. The bible everywhere represents them as designed for the trial of our faith. Understand that here you are in a school of discipline, preparing for scenes of usefulness in another world. And understand, that although you may not now see the wisdom of those dispensations which try you, yet when you come to be removed to those spheres of influence and usefulness, for which you are preparing, you will perceive the perfect wisdom of God in making you pass through these fiery trials. God does nothing in vain.

All these things are parts of the necessary discipline through which we must pass. This world is a great school, and every servant of God must take his degree. He cannot be discharged from these conflicts until by them he is prepared for glory.

- 23. Learn with the Psalmist to set the Lord always before you. Persons are very apt to fret at little things when they would not at great events, because in the less they see not, while in the greater they do see the providence of God. Learn then to let this be an omnipresent consideration, that in all things, great and small, the hand of God is present. Set Him always before you, and let your mind be filled with the idea, that in everything that occurs, in some sense God is present.
- 24. Lastly, learn to appropriate the grace of Christ to the complete suppression of this sin of fretfulness. The providences that develop the spirit of fretfulness, are designed to show us our weakness and the need of the grace of Christ to perfect the grace of patience in us. That which you need therefore, is to learn to lay hold on Christ in such a sense as to be kept from the commission of this sin. The Apostle said--let us draw near to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Now grace is designed to help against the commission of sin. As, under the providences of God, one of our weaknesses and defects of character is developed after another, we should from time to time apply to Christ, and believe for the entire overcoming of the temptation and defect.

REMARKS.

1. Certain persons are constitutionally much exposed to the commission of this sin.

(1.) Those who have large development of order are exceedingly liable to fret, when brought into contact, or when intimately associated with those of an opposite development. Here is a man who has order large; he has a place for everything, and everything in its place. He can arise at night and put his hand on any book or tool that he wants to use. Now if he is associated in business with those around him who are of an opposite tendency, who have a place for nothing, and nothing in its place, it will be a grievous trial to him. If such an one has a wife of an opposite tendency from his own, whose kitchen looks like bedlam, and whose house, from the garret to the cellar, is in a state of disorder, he must have great grace, or he will live in a continual fret. There is a woman, whose development of order is large; her person and her house are but exhibitions of the perfection of order. Her meals are ready at a certain hour and moment. She has a time and place for everything, and everything is at the proper time, and in its proper place. Now suppose her husband throws off his dirty boots, and leaves them in the middle of the floor; he spits all over her carpet; throws his dirty clothes all about; wipes his dirty feet on her andirons, and does everything else under the law of disorder. Now, unless he can be reclaimed, and taught a different course of conduct, she might almost as well live with the devil as with him. He leaves the doors open, and everything is out of place, so far as his influence extends. His children have his tendencies of mind. The help in the kitchen are influenced by his example; and thus the poor woman is thrown on the rack, and is tried from morning till night. It is very difficult for such persons to live together, and yet the providence of God has brought them together, and afforded them a

good opportunity of manifesting in these relations, the spirit and temper of Christ; the one to exercise patience, and the other to mend his ways.

(2.) Those who have a strong sense of right and wrong, if thrown into the society of those who have but little sense of right and wrong, are strongly tempted to impatience. They are often amazed, and grieved, and disgusted with the want of principle, the loose morality, the want of conscientiousness and justice of those around them. They feel their indignation enkindled, and sometimes are strongly tempted to rebuke them in a manner and spirit that would do more hurt than good.

(3.) Dyspeptics are very much disposed to the commission of this sin. An acid stomach naturally tends to an acidity of mind, and where persons have weak digestive organs, they need much grace to keep them from fretting.

(4.) Nervous persons have also strong tendencies to fretfulness. Persons also of a bilious temperament. You see a person of a sallow countenance: and manifestly bilious tendencies, be careful in all your intercourse with him. He cannot in general endure, what others may, without fretting. In all your treatment of such an one, be kind and considerate, be compassionate and forbearing, else you will tempt him to sin against God in this respect.

(5.) An unsubdued will greatly exposes a person to the sin of fretfulness. When the will has not been subdued in childhood or youth, persons are extremely apt before they are aware to get into a passion if their will is crossed. They are impatient whenever they cannot have their own way in anything and everything.

(6.) A largely developed sensibility, exposes one to temptation in this respect. Those persons whose feelings are deep and quick on every subject, need to be much on their guard, lest when suddenly assailed with temptation, they should fret. There is a great difference among persons in this respect. Some persons are constitutionally much more mild and amiable than others. Some are constitutionally disposed to take almost everything easily, while others have naturally a quick, irascible temper. Their resentments are naturally quick and strong. This class of persons need peculiar grace, or they will frequently dishonor God by the indulgence of an evil temper.

2. I remark again, it is of the greatest importance to guard against fretfulness as a habit. Some persons have indulged in it until they really deserve to be indicted as common scolds. They really are a nuisance in community. I know a man who was a professor of religion, yet so much had he given way to this tendency to fretfulness, that he would sometimes break out into such a passion as really to curse and swear. Such a professor of religion is a deep disgrace to the cause he professes to love.

3. I remark again, that those of an irritable temper, often fail, on account of striving to overcome this propensity by mere legal efforts, by the force of their resolutions, prayers, and watchfulness, instead of committing themselves in this respect, to the keeping of Christ. Christ is your keeper. You will never keep yourselves. Unless you commit yourselves to Christ to be kept from the commission of this sin, all our resolutions will be of no avail. You will fall as often as you are tempted, until you will

be disheartened.

4. This leads me to remark again, that many persons have fallen into great discouragements with respect to the possibility of ever overcoming the temptation. They have prayed against it, they have fought, and watched, and resolved, and wept, and agonized, and tried and fallen, and resolved again, and so often have their prayers been repeated without avail, that they have sunk down in discouragement. Now let me say to such persons, when you have used all your own stock and exhausted your own strength, till you are worn out with attempts to keep yourselves, I hope you will learn to trust in Christ. Christ will keep you, if you will let Him, if you will not push Him back, and undertake to keep yourselves. You may not be conscious of doing this, but be assured you do not appropriate the grace of Christ, nor really consent to give yourself up to be kept by Him, or He would keep you.

5. Again, God in His providence is continually developing the weakness and imperfection of His people, that they may see their need of one mightier than themselves to save them. Do not then be discouraged, when by His providence He tries you, and develops your need of a Savior. But learn to lay hold of and appropriate the grace which is provided as your remedy.

6. Lastly, I love to reflect on the fact that God's plan embraces all events, that His plan is perfect, that He will do all His pleasure; that He can do all His pleasure, that the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain. That therefore we need not make ourselves wretched and unhappy, and vex our souls on account of anything that occurs in the universe, but compose our minds in view of it all, as God composes His; concern ourselves to do our own duty, and not suffer ourselves to fret about the conduct of others. Let us try to reform them, and try to do them good, pity and pray for them, but by no means suffer their evil doing to cause us to do evil, and to dishonor God. Always remembering not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

Governing the Tongue

Lecture II

January 29, 1845

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--James 1:26: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

In remarking upon these words, I will notice:

I. The rule by which the tongue is to be governed.

II. The conditions upon which it is to be governed.

III. Show that where the tongue is not governed, there is and can be no true religion.

I notice--

I. The rule by which the tongue is to be governed.

- 1. The rule is that of perfect, disinterested, and universal benevolence or love. This is the unalterable law of right. Whatever responsible act of a moral agent is not conformed to this, is wrong; whatever is conformed to this, is right. Love, or benevolence is the fulfilling of the law. This is the one and only rule to which all responsible actions of all moral beings are always and universally to be conformed. This is the rule by which the tongue is to be governed. The tongue is directly and by a law of necessity governed by the heart or will. It cannot move unless moved by the will. It cannot be either good or bad without the will's consent and impulse. No other power can govern it, nor can any other power prevent its being used in conformity with the action of the will.
- 2. The same rule stated in other language is, that of entire consecration to God and the good of being. This is only good willing or benevolence expressed in other language. Entire consecration to God and to the good of being, is an act or state of the will. It is the will in the attitude of devoting, consecrating, offering up the whole being to the promotion of universal good. Entire consecration is the rule by which the tongue is to be governed. It should be consecrated by the heart to the glory of God and the good of being, and used for no other purpose whatever.
- 3. The Scriptures recognize this truth. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Idle words in the sense of this text are useless words, words not spoken to edification, nor with a design to glorify God and benefit man. Some commentators over-looking the rule by which the tongue is to be governed, have supposed by idle words in this passage, are meant slanderous, or false, or censorious, or bitter words. But the language is plain, and should be understood in its plain natural sense; for then and only then does it come up to the manifest rule by which the tongue is to be governed. That the tongue is to be governed by the rule of universal love, or entire consecration to God, none can rationally doubt. All words then spoken for any other end than to promote the good of being are idle words, and are sin against God. To bridle the tongue then is to so check and rein it in, and control it, as that its use shall be wholly conformed to the law of God.

II. The conditions upon which it may be governed.

- 1. The first condition indispensable to the government of the tongue in accordance with the rule as above stated, is perfect love in the heart, or in other words, that the will should be in a benevolent attitude--that the glory of God and the good of being should be its supreme aim, design, or choice. I have said that the tongue is governed by the will, by a law of necessity. The

will is free, but the tongue is not free. It is connected by a physical or necessary law, with the action of the will. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth not only does but must speak, if it speaks at all. All our physical powers so far as they are directly under our control at all, are connected with the action of the will, by a law of necessity. At the bidding of the will they move, or cease to move. Now where there is perfect benevolence of heart, no power that is under the control of the will can be used in any other than a benevolent manner. When the heart is in the attitude of supreme, disinterested benevolence, the tongue is used and cannot but be used for the glory of God and the good of being. But if this be not the state of the heart, the tongue cannot be used benevolently. All use of the tongue is idle and sinful when the heart is not in a benevolent state. No matter how much the tongue might edify men or glorify God, its use is an idle use so far as the speaker is concerned, if his aim be not benevolent. A man might teach mathematics, philosophy, or theology with a selfish heart, in which case the use of his tongue is sin, because his intention is sin. It is not conformed to the law of love, but is under the influence of selfishness. If God overrules this selfish use of the tongue to promote His own glory, no thanks to him who thus uses his tongue, for he means no such thing. His object is to glorify himself, to get a good name or a piece of bread. It should always be understood that any use of the tongue is sinful when the heart is not in a perfectly benevolent state.

- 2. The spirit of entire consecration is an indispensable condition to the government of the tongue. As I have already said, this is only another way of stating the same rule, and this condition is only another form of stating the spirit of the same condition. If the heart be entirely consecrated to God, the tongue will be, and must be, and cannot but be consecrated also; but when ever the heart is not entirely consecrated, the tongue if used at all, is used idly, with selfish intentions and not for the glory of God.
- 3. It is an important and often indispensable condition of governing the tongue that we abstain from very strong excitement. If the feelings become very strongly excited, they are very apt to control the will. At this point all virtue ceases of course. The will acts virtuously, only when it obeys the law of the intelligence, or in other words, the commandments of God as they are revealed in the intelligence. When the feelings instead of God through the intelligence give law to the will, there is no virtue. People are very apt to imagine that they are virtuous in proportion as they are governed by strong feelings; whereas exactly the reverse of this is true.

I have said that when feeling becomes very strong, it is very apt to control the will. The will then acts purely in obedience to the impulses of feeling, under no other law than that of obeying the most strongly excited emotions. Now if the will in obedience to feeling governs the tongue, it is not governed by the law of love or benevolence. Be sure there is always feeling and sometimes strong feeling when there is true benevolence, and as the result of true benevolence. But the law of benevolence and not of feeling, should control the will and consequently the tongue.

Farther, when the mind is strongly excited we are apt to speak extravagantly and often falsely in fact, without ourselves at the time realizing it. We behold things through a medium which magnifies greatly. We almost of course represent them as they appear to us, which is usually a misrepresentation. For my own part, I can say that I seldom get strongly excited on any subject without having occasion afterward to repent of something

that I said during my excitement.

- 4. A deeply considerate or reflective state of mind is indispensable to the proper government of the tongue. The man who speaks without consideration and without thinking, speaks idly and at random. Surely if he would speak for the edification of men and the glory of God, he needs to have his thoughts about him and to think well before he speaks.
- 5. Another condition is a sense of the divine presence. Let a man set God always before him, and realize that he is speaking in the presence of God, and he will bridle his tongue. His words will be few and well chosen. He cannot trifle, realizing that he is in the presence of the great, heart-searching God, nor will he speak falsely, censoriously, bitterly, or unnecessarily. Only let his heart be full of love, and let him have a conscious realization of the divine presence, and the law of love shall ever dwell upon his tongue.
- 6. Another condition of governing the tongue is the appropriate grace and strength of Christ. Indeed Christ must be in him, working in him to will, to say, and to do, or he will never govern his tongue. He must put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man. He must abide in Christ and Christ must abide in him. He must live a life of faith in Christ Jesus. He must walk in the Spirit and entirely mortify the deeds of the flesh. He must know what it is to yield up his whole body, "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."
- 7. He must have faith to lay hold of and appropriate the grace, strength, and promises of Christ for the complete subjugation of his tongue to the law of love. He must believe in Christ and receive Christ as the keeper of his tongue as well as of all his other powers. He will never govern his own tongue: he will never in this respect keep himself. He must have faith to lay hold of that class of promises which pledge sufficient grace to secure the entire consecration of all his powers to God.
- 8. He must have moral courage to dare to keep silence when he ought to keep silence. It is generally considered very odd and uncouth, unsociable and hateful for a man to keep silence when he has nothing important to say. The state of society seems to demand that to be good company, he must discharge from his tongue a perpetual stream of words. Volley after volley of sense or nonsense must be poured forth, or people will inquire, What ails you? You seem to be very silent, very unsociable; you seem to be brooding over some distressing subject; you need cheerful society and recreation, amusement or light-reading--something to give your tongue an impulse. Now in these days of incessant babble when the world is full of talk about beaux and belles, and novels and politics and every thing else, who does not know that it requires a good deal of moral courage to be silent when not called to speak for the glory of God and the good of man?
 - (a.) You must have moral courage to dare to speak when you ought, and what you ought. Men are often placed in circumstances where it is no small trial for them to speak what the circumstances demand--to reprove sin and hold up the truth in love. Now the proper government of the tongue, demands not only that we should abstain from speaking what we ought not, but that we should always speak when and what we ought. But to dare to

do this, often requires no small amount of courage.

- o (b.) Again, you need moral courage to be as singular in all places, and at all times, as conformity to the law of love would make you. How eccentric a man would be called in these days, who should use his tongue neither more nor less nor for any other purpose than the glory of God and the good of man demand.

III. Where the tongue is not governed, there is and can be no true religion.

- 1. In proof of this position I cite the text. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."
- 2. It is not intended that an occasional fall in the use of the tongue, proves that one has never been converted and is at no time truly religious; but that when he does not govern his tongue, he has at that time no true conformity to the law of God, and consequently no true religion. His heart is not then in the attitude of benevolence. It if were he could not misuse his tongue. But if he be not benevolent, he is not at the time truly religious. Again,
- 3. When the tongue is not habitually governed in accordance with this rule, there is no habitual benevolence--consequently no habitual true religion, which if the Bible is true, is the same thing as to say, there is no true religion at all. For the least that can be said of a true Christian, is that he does not habitually sin; that holiness is the rule and sin only the exception. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."
- 4. I have already said that a benevolent heart will secure and by a law of necessity must secure a benevolent use of the tongue; that is, in such a case the tongue will be and must be used for the glory of God and the good of being. Where it is not so used, it is a palpable matter of fact that the heart is not right with God. Nothing can be more certain than that a spirit of idle talking is inconsistent with a benevolent state of the heart.

REMARKS.

1. The Bible represents the government of the tongue not only as indispensable to true religion, but as its most difficult duty. Thus James, in chapter three, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever

the governor listeth. Even so, the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

2. The Bible says much upon the necessity of bridling the tongue. I will only quote two or three passages in addition to those already quoted. Eccl. 5:2-3; "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by the multitude of words." Prov. 10:19; "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise."

3. If every idle word is sin, what multitudes of professors are living in sin! Great multitudes of professors give themselves up to unrestrained indulgence in talking, as really and fully as the great mass of sinners who make no pretensions to religion. Rely upon it, they will never go babbling on to heaven. Idle talkers and vain jesters are not among the ransomed of the Lord.

4. What a world of evil would be put away if the tongue were governed by the law of love. It is indeed "a world of iniquity; it often setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell." The tongue is the great instrument of excitement. We excite ourselves and we excite others by talking. All the busy play of passion, and all its monstrous developments are aroused, and quickened, and thrown into overwhelming commotion by the idle use of the tongue.

Let the tongue be governed by the law of love, and what a change would be made in families and neighborhoods, in cities and towns, in all human society! What a change in our halls of legislation!

5. The government of the tongue is indispensable to entire sanctification; that is, no man is entirely sanctified unless he entirely governs his tongue by the law of love. Let this always be understood and kept in mind by those who profess to have attained, or who are aiming to attain to a state of entire sanctification.

6. It does not seem to be generally understood and believed, that every idle word is sin. Many who profess to keep a conscience void of offense, and to be from day to day not conscious of sin, seem manifestly often to use their tongues in a manner not conformed to the law of love. Who can believe that all the needless and idle talking that we hear among professed Christians is for the glory of God and the good of man, or that it is even intended to be?

7. Idle words are as really sinful, as false, censorious, or profane words. I say they are as really sinful. They may be vastly more sinful, or they may be less sinful according to the light enjoyed. One man may be in the sight of God vastly more guilty for levity in conversation than another for profanity. The degree of guilt depends upon the degree of light before the mind. There is great want of

consideration upon this subject. If the most ignorant man tells a falsehood, or is profane, we cry out against him; and if he is a member of the church, we excommunicate him. Now this is all well; for the most ignorant man knows better than to lie or to be profane. But others, with greater light than he, may be equally guilty and equally deserving of excommunication, for an idle use of the tongue.

8. From this subject we see the necessity of judging our character in the light of this test. Every day and every hour we should examine ourselves in the use of our tongues. We are almost incessantly using them, and unless we keep the rule in view by which they are to be governed, a world of iniquity will accumulate upon our souls before we are aware of it.

9. This subject is of great importance to families. The necessity of governing the tongue should be constantly inculcated in every family. Observance of this rule is indispensable to the life and power of family religion.

10. The indispensable necessity of governing the tongue, should be urged in common schools, and in all places where children and youth are associated together. If children are allowed to make an unrestrained use of their tongues in respect to levity and unrestrained talking, a most important part of their education is omitted. Why though they are taught that they must not lie, or be profane, or vulgar, or licentious in conversation, this is of little use, unless they are taught that their tongues are to be governed entirely by the law of universal love.

11. This subject is of great importance to ministers of the gospel. I have heard it said of some ministers--"When I see him in the pulpit I think he never ought to come out; and when I see him out, I think he never ought to go in." There are some ministers, I hope not many, who preach well and solemnly; but when out of the pulpit, they are very much given to levity, to jesting, and trifling conversation, insomuch that their idle talk out of the pulpit completely nullifies the spiritual power of their preaching in it. My brother, unless you use your tongue for God's glory out of the pulpit, you have no right to expect to be blessed in the use of it in the pulpit. Take care what you say, always, and in all places, and be sure you do not have the spirit of levity, and an idle gossiping state of mind; for if you have, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and the people will see it. Your Christian and ministerial influence will be destroyed, and you will become a stumbling-block to souls. O! a trifling minister--what a curse to human society--what a dishonor to God!

12. The tongue is a great occasion of backsliding. Let a man but open his mouth and give up the rein to the tongue in any company and at any time, and he will soon find that when he has done talking he cannot pray. Let him try it. I have no doubt that many professors of religion have grieved the Spirit of God an hundred and a thousand times by idle words--have found themselves away from God and without the spirit of prayer, with gross darkness covering them, yet do not realize the cause. Ask them what they have done to get away from God, and they say they can't tell. If they would but reflect upon the use they have made of their tongues, they would find cause enough. Let them take their pens and attempt to recall and record all the idle words, and they will soon be convinced that innumerable sins have accumulated upon their souls, and shut out from them the light of heaven.

13. An unbridled tongue is not only a great snare to him who uses it, but is a great temptation, a snare, and a curse to those who listen. One man or woman given to much talking, may divert the attention of

hundreds of minds from God; may engage multitudes of tongues in replying to their incessant babble; and indeed a world of words, idle as the wind, if not hateful and blasphemous, may be occasioned by some one great talker. A great talker, in the common acceptance of that term is a curse to any family, to any neighborhood, to any church, to any community, to the world. His unruly tongue must be restrained, or he will scatter around him, fire-brands, arrows, and death.

14. From this subject we can see the great evil and the great sin of what are termed social visits. Who does not know that it is almost impolite to talk otherwise than idly on those occasions? To introduce and confine yourself to religion or any other topic of serious import, designed for the glory of God and the general good of man, would be considered excessively ill-timed and out of place. The fact is, that social parties are designed for the unrestrained indulgence of the tongue. They would soon cease to be attended if no other conversation were allowed than what is for the glory of God and the good of man. How often, think you, would the gay and thoughtless multitude assemble in social parties, if no other conversation were allowed but such as is in accordance with the law of God?

It is amazing to hear professors of religion defend and plead for what they call the cultivation of the social powers. It is manifest that they often mean by this nothing more nor less than the cultivation of that idle gossip, that chit chat, idle, frivolous course of conversation, pursued in what are called social parties. How any person that even pretends to be consecrated to God can give up his tongue, his time, and his powers to be used in that manner, has always been mysterious to me since I have know any thing about religion.

15. Many persons never keep their tongues still long enough to be converted. They talk so incessantly, that if at any time the Spirit of the Lord comes near and strives with them, they grieve Him right away by their idle talk. They ought to understand that the Spirit comes to convict and persuade; that is, to make men think, and see things in their true light. They should know that without serious thought and deep, intense reflection, they will never turn to the Lord. Thus the Psalmist says, "I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." "Thus saith the Lord, consider your ways." God complains of His professed people, that "they will not consider." How can they consider, when they cultivate the habit of giving incessant license to their tongues? Many impenitent sinners seem never to have thought that they should restrain their tongues, and speak only when and what duty calls them to speak.

16. It is a great evil to be thrown into the society of a great talker. He will neither think himself nor suffer you to do so; but babble on incessantly, like the running of a brook. If for a moment you try to think, some impertinent question, some trifling thing which you neither know nor care about, is thrust into your face, and demands a reply. O, if such men once knew the luxury of deep and silent thought, and would sometimes retire within themselves and let others think, they would do the world a favor.

17. Great multitudes of professors of religion seem unable to grow in grace and become established in religion, because of the idle use of their tongues. This sin must be overcome; it must be put away. Professor, it is too hard for you to attempt it in your unassisted strength. No man can tame the tongue, but Christ can tame it. Christ governed His own tongue, and can govern yours if you will give it up to Him and let Him become its keeper. Will you do it? When will you do it? Will you do it now? Will you consecrate your tongue to Him with the full understanding that you shall never use it any more

but for the glory of God, any more than you would use it to blaspheme His holy name? Do it, my brother, my sister: do it now!

Dependence on Christ

Lecture III

February 26, 1845

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--John 15:5: "Without Me ye can do nothing."

In discussing this subject I shall show:

I. The meaning of the text.

II. What is implied in it.

III. The importance of understanding and believing it.

IV. The proneness of the human heart to overlook and practically deny it.

I. The meaning of the text.

The context shows that Christ means to affirm an impossibility, for He says, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." Now whatever metaphysical or philosophical distinctions we may be disposed to make here, it is plain that Christ intended to affirm the impossibility of doing anything without Him or independently of Him. This inability extends to everything, but the context shows that He means in this passage to affirm it only of holiness or goodness.

II. What is implied in it.

The text implies that we are not required to do anything without Him. If it be impossible to do anything without Him, it cannot be our duty to do it; for it can never be a man's duty to do what is impossible.

Again, that every command implies a corresponding promise, that is, if we are required to do anything by Christ, the very requirement is a virtual promise or proffer of all the aid we need to make it

possible for us to perform it. Indeed, the command in itself is an implied proffer of all needed help.

It is often said that the commands of God are addressed to us as moral agents, and that as such, because we are moral agents, we are bound to obey, irrespective of any assistance from God. Now rightly understood this language is correct; but it is extremely liable to be misunderstood. The inquiry is, What is implied in moral agency? There is a difference between acting morally, and simply having the natural powers requisite for such action. A man may have eyes, but without light he cannot see, and is therefore under no obligation to see. So a man may possess the powers of a moral being, but without light on the subject of duty he is not prepared for moral action. He is a moral being in the sense of having the requisite natural powers; but light is the indispensable condition of bringing these powers into action, or in other words light is the indispensable condition of moral agency. His moral powers can be exercised on no subject until he has light upon it. He is under no moral obligation further than he has light. A heathen who has never heard of Christ is under no obligation to believe in Christ, and in respect to Christ he has not the responsibilities of a moral agent. He possesses those faculties which will render him responsible as soon as Christ is made known to him; but without some knowledge of Christ, he can be under no moral obligation to believe in Him.

Light therefore, is a condition of moral agency, and, of course, of moral obligation. If supernatural light is needed, then supernatural light is the condition of moral obligation: if merely natural light or the light of nature is sufficient, then that is a condition of moral obligation. If the light of the written word of God is sufficient, then that is a condition. The kind and degree of light requisite to impose moral obligation varies upon different subjects. The mere light of nature may be sufficient to impose obligation in reference to a great multitude of duties; but on many of the great questions of the gospel, the light of divine revelation is needed to impose moral obligation, for without this revelation, the mind can know nothing of these duties.

To a right apprehension of many truths of the gospel, the illumination of the Holy Spirit is needed, and without His influence the mind does not and cannot comprehend the length and breadth, and depth and height of these truths, cannot apprehend them in any such sense as that an individual can embrace Christ and know either the Father or the Son without the Holy Ghost.

Now when Christ says, "Without Me ye can do nothing;" He doubtless means to affirm that without divine light shining upon the pages of inspiration and upon the works of God--without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, holiness is impossible to us. The assertion of the text therefore implies that divine light is proffered to us, and that this light is given by Christ.

Again, the text implies the absolute Deity of Christ. If Christ is not God it is absurd, and false for Him to say, "Without Me, ye can do nothing."

III. The importance of understanding and believing the doctrine of the text.

- 1. If we do not understand that we are dependent on Christ, we shall not and cannot believe it. It is impossible to believe what we do not understand. This is sometimes doubted, but if properly understood, the proposition must be self-evident. We cannot believe unless the mind apprehends that which is to be believed. Yet I may believe a fact without being able to explain the philosophy of the facts. For example, I may believe the fact that Christ died for sinners

without being at all able to understand the high policy of Jehovah's government upon which the doctrine of atonement is based, or which rendered His death necessary. Now I am not required to believe anything respecting the philosophy of the atonement, but simply the fact--a thing which I can understand. It may be gratifying and useful for me to search out the philosophy of it, but it is not at all necessary to my salvation that I should believe anything more than the fact of the atonement. So I may believe thousands of facts and truths, the philosophy of which I cannot comprehend; but I am not able nor am I required to believe anything more in any case than I can understand. The doctrine of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, I can understand; that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God; but the exact sense in which these are three, and the sense also in which they are one, I cannot comprehend, nor am I under any obligation to comprehend it, nor to believe anything more respecting this or any other doctrine than I can comprehend.

It is therefore of great importance with respect to the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ that we should understand the fact as a fact. Whether or not we are able to understand the philosophy of this dependence is of no consequence. It is enough for us to understand that such is the fact, that without Christ we can do nothing.

- 2. To understand this doctrine is more than to admit it. I may admit a thing in theory which after all I don't understand. I may admit multitudes of truths, yea any and all the truths of the gospel without really understanding one of them. The truth of our dependence upon Christ is generally admitted, but not so generally is it rationally understood.
- 3. Properly to understand it is to realize it--to perceive it's truth; and have in the mind a felt realization of it's truth.
- 4. To believe this truth is more than to hold it in theory. A man may hold in theory the whole Confession of Faith, he may defend it, may argue in favor of it, and suppose himself to believe it, while in fact, in the gospel sense, he does not believe a word of it. Many who professed faith in the doctrine of the Second Advent of Christ, have held it and defended it as a theory, but manifestly have not believed it. Faith is the yielding up of the mind to be influenced by truth apprehended by the intellect. It is the mind's confiding, trusting, receiving a truth. Now nothing is more common than for persons to hold and defend a truth in theory which they do not really believe. To believe the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ is to commit or surrender the mind up to the influence of this truth--to repose on Christ--to confide the soul really to His keeping.
- 5. To believe this truth implies the continual remembrance of it. It implies that we hold the mind in the attitude of dependence and trust. Suppose I am leading a little child by the hand, I give him my finger and lead him along upon the brink of a frightful precipice. I tell him, without me you will fall. Now if he believes this, he will hold fast to my hand. His mind will be in a constant attitude of depending, trusting, holding on to me. Now this illustrates what I mean by believing in our dependence upon Christ. The mind that believes in this will not attempt to do any thing without Christ.

But take another illustration. Suppose here is a man who has but one leg. He never

attempts to walk without a crutch. When he sits down, he lays his crutch by his side, or sets it up within reach. Whenever he attempts to walk, the very first movement of his mind is towards his crutch. Just so with the mind that believes in the doctrine of dependence upon Christ. It is just as natural for this mind to throw itself upon Christ, in the performance of every duty as it is for the lame man to throw himself upon his crutch.

Again, not to understand and believe this is real infidelity in respects to Christ. It is a real rejection of the gospel of Christ and of Christ Himself. No man understands and believes the gospel in any saving sense, who does not understand and believe his universal dependence upon Christ.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine renders the soul proud and presumptuous. If a man depends upon his own powers, unenlightened by the Spirit of Christ, he is depending upon the bruised reed of his own resolutions, and must inevitably find himself in perpetual condemnation.

Again, to reject this doctrine is to dishonor Christ greatly, and as I have said, to discard His gospel entirely.

Again, to reject or overlook this doctrine leaves the soul to neglect due watchfulness. If a man is not sensible of his constant dependence upon the indwelling Spirit of Christ, he will not feel the necessity of watchfulness and prayer so as to retain the Spirit of Christ.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine makes us the sport of temptation. A man is certain to be overcome if he attempts to resist temptation in his own strength, just as certain as a man of one leg would be to fall if he should attempt to run without his crutch.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine leads to ultimate discouragement. When persons make attempts to stand in their own strength and find themselves continually overcome, they are soon led to doubt seriously whether there is any such thing as standing before the power of temptation. Finding themselves perfectly impotent in their own strength and not believing in Christ as they ought, they fall of course.

Again, the understanding and belief of this truth tends to results opposite to those just mentioned. To believe this truth causes the mind to be careful not to grieve the Spirit of Christ. It renders the soul humble and empties it of all its proud, self-righteous dependence upon self. It naturally engages the soul to love Christ, to honor Him, and watch carefully against doing any thing that might displease Him. It strips the mind of all dependence upon its own resolutions and unaided efforts; it teaches the mind where to go in the hour of temptation, and throws it upon Christ its all-sufficient support; keeps the soul out of bondage, begets gratitude, fixes the attention and thoughts upon Christ and engages the soul to live by faith in Him.

IV. Notice the proneness of the human mind to overlook and deny this truth.

- 1. In some sense everyone knows it to be true, and yet few realize its truth in any such sense as

to make a practical use of it. This is evident partly from the fact that they do not think of it. They do not realize it as the lame man realizes that he cannot walk without his crutch. His dependence upon his crutch is with him an omnipresent reality. He always thinks of it whenever he attempts to walk. Now if an individual really receives this truth, it will be to him an omnipresent reality. The fact of his dependence of Christ will be so deeply settled in his mind that he will just as naturally and certainly turn to Christ for support as the lame man turns to his crutch.

- 2. But another evidence that few realize and believe this truth, we have in the fact that so little gratitude is felt and manifested to Christ. If our dependence were an omnipresent reality, we could not fail, having performed any duty, to feel our obligation to Christ for having wrought in us to will and do this thing. We should not take the credit to ourselves, but be grateful to Him.
- 3. Another evidence that this truth is not believed by many, is the fact that they are so little afraid to sin against Christ. It cannot be that they would be so reckless of sinning against Him if they believed themselves absolutely dependent on Him for all their own right actions. Suppose that you were entirely dependent upon someone to lead and uphold you every step you take; could you suffer yourself to abuse your guide and supporter?
- 4. Another evidence we have in the fact that there is so little praying against temptation, so little looking to Him for grace to support and strengthen us at every step. The bible teaches that God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure--that all our springs are in Him--that He is our life, and that there is no good in us only as it is wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ. Now that there is not much hearty confidence in these truths, even in the church, manifests itself in many ways. For example, there is but little prayer comparatively for restraining grace, for upholding grace, for the indwelling and energizing of the Holy Spirit. There is but little of the spirit of thanksgiving for the constant aid and agency of the Spirit of God.

Again, if for a short time Christians are kept from a besetting sin, they soon cease to thank Him for sustaining grace, and lose a sense of the fact that He is truly keeping them above it. They think they have so overcome the temptation to that sin, that they are dead to it, and their tendency in that direction has ceased. Their taking up this notion often makes it necessary for Christ to withhold His restraining grace, in order to remind them that not they but He has kept them from falling. Thus He teaches them by bitter experience, what they will not learn from His word, that without Him they can do nothing.

Again, in proportion as they are kept above sin, they are prone to lose a sense of the fact that the grace of Christ upholds them. If they are supported just enough to feel the keen force of temptation and the necessity of cleaving to Christ continually, they do not lose a sense of dependence; but if Christ only for a short time lifts them so high that temptation does not seem to touch them, they immediately become forgetful of their dependence, wax self-confident, dishonor and grieve His Spirit, and fall into temptation.

Again, as we do not see, nor hear, nor directly feel the hand that supports us, we are constantly prone to forget that we are supported. The influence which Christ exerts is not

a physical but a moral one. It is the power of truth and persuasion, the power of divine light which sustains the mind. Now as we do not directly see the agency of Christ employed in sustaining us, we are very apt to overlook the fact that His invisible agency is our constant support.

Again, thoroughly to learn the lesson of our dependence upon Christ so that it shall be an ever-present reality to us, is one of the most difficult things in the Christian religion. There is nothing more contrary to the natural pride and independence of human nature. There is not a doctrine of the bible which we are more prone to disbelieve and practically reject than this. It may be admitted as a theory forever, without being ever believed.

Again, it is one of the most difficult things, always to remember practically that we cannot take one step in the path of obedience without depending on Christ, anymore than a lame man can take a step without his crutches

Again, Christ has more trouble with us on this point than perhaps any other. It is easy for Him to support us if He could persuade us to depend upon Him. He can easily guide us if we will keep hold of His hand. He can easily carry our burdens if we will suffer Him to do so. He can work in and for us all that we need with infinite ease, if we will but trust in Him and surrender up our mind to His influence. In short, the greatest practical difficulty in the Christian religion, lies in the right understanding and belief of the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ. I say a right understanding and belief, because to believe this in one sense and in a particular form, is Antinomianism: to understand and believe it in another sense, is sheer legality. Legality rests in Christ as an atoning sacrifice, but not as an indwelling, upholding, all-sustaining, and controlling Spirit. It receives an outward but not an inward Christ--a Christ in heaven, but not a Christ in the heart; a Mediator between God and man, an Advocate on high, but not a present sanctification in the soul. It is receiving Him in the latter sense which constitutes the right belief of our dependence upon Christ. Indeed, He must be received both as an atoning sacrifice--a risen, reigning, glorified Redeemer--a Mediator and Advocate with the Father; and also as an indwelling, sanctifying, constantly operating, upholding, guiding, renovating Spirit. He must be received by the mind's own faith, to dwell in the inward sanctuary of our own being, there to exert a constant sustaining and sanctifying influence, to work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Unbelief as it respects this doctrine, in the form in which I now state it, is the occasion of all our failures and of all our sins. It is a want of apprehending this doctrine, and of thoroughly embracing it that leaves so many souls in bondage to worry and flounder along in the state described in the seventh chapter to the Romans, without ever finding their way to the experience of the eighth chapter.

REMARKS.

1. As I have already intimated, many hold this doctrine in theory, who never realize or practically believe it.
2. To this class of persons, this doctrine is a fatal stumbling-block. Holding as a theory the doctrine of

their dependence of Christ, and yet not actually depending on Him, inevitably leaves them in sin; for their theory prevents their making any effort to help themselves, and their unbelief prevents their casting themselves upon Christ, so that they settle down into Antinomianism, in the form so generally witnessed among professors of religion. They make their dependence their excuse for not obeying God; whereas, did they really believe this doctrine of dependence, and actually cast themselves on Him, they would do their duty. Now this class of persons are laboring under a great delusion. They suppose they truly believe the doctrine of their dependence upon Christ, whereas, they only hold it as a soul-crippling, God-dishonoring theory, and therefore it is to them a most fatal stumbling-block.

Again, the real belief of it as a gospel fact, will secure a real as opposed to a theoretical dependence upon Christ. If a man believes his dependence upon Christ because the Bible asserts it; if he believes it as a truth of the gospel and a revealed fact, he will of course believe farther than this, that in Christ, and with the help of Christ, he can do all things required of him. The Apostle Paul says, that of himself he was unable even to think anything as of himself; but adds in another place, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me." Now it is very manifest, that if the doctrine of dependence is embraced as a truth of revelation, the other fact will also be embraced as alike revealed; viz: That we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us. The belief of this will of course secure obedience to Christ.

From what has been said, we may learn what the true doctrine of natural ability is, namely, that every moral agent is really able to do whatever God requires of him; that when God requires us to believe in Christ He gives us so much light as renders us able to believe; that when He requires us to repent, He gives us so much light that we are able to repent; but that we are not able to work out that which is good by virtue of possessing the powers of a moral being, independently of divine light.

Again, we may see what I meant by the assertion that Christ is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Every moral agent, in just so far as he is a moral agent, is enlightened by Christ.

Again, it is of very little use to speculate about the philosophy of divine influence in the soul, or the manner in which Christ upholds and sustains us. The fact is the thing to be believed, and although I have myself speculated much, and often very much to my own injury, upon the mode of divine influence, still I am convinced that to lay hold of the fact without concerning ourselves to understand the mode of divine operation is the great thing to be attained to.

Again, we need to settle it as a fact of as much stability as the fact of our own existence, that we shall and can do nothing if the divine support is withdrawn; and yet that it is always so proffered to us that we are perfectly responsible for every duty enjoined in the scriptures.

Again, it is of the last importance that we understand what it is to depend constantly on Christ. Now we can acknowledge our dependence without depending. I can hold in theory and in fact that I am dependent, without being willing to be dependent; without the act of depending, without casting myself upon Christ, and settling down upon Him. Now depending is an act of the will or heart. It is, as I have said, a holding on to Christ. It is an ever active state of mind. It is a cleaving to Him, and is as really an act of the mind as it is to hold on to the hand of a fellow-being. The child upon the

precipice who holds onto my hand, must hold his mind in a state of dependence, or he cannot hold on to my hand. Did his mind let go of me, the muscles of his arm would instantly relax, and he would let go of my hand. Now a depending and holding on to Christ, is as really an active state of the will as if we used our hand to hold on to Him. This needs to be understood, and a want of properly understanding this is the reason why persons do not abide in Christ. "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Now to abide in Christ, is for the mind to cleave to Him, to depend on Him not as an outward and distant Savior or atoning sacrifice, but as a present, inward, in-dwelling support, a help at hand, a God as near to me as I am to myself. This is the true idea of depending on Christ. Without this dependence we can do nothing; with it, we do all things. Brethren, think of this?

Weights and Besetting Sins

Lecture IV

March 12, 1845

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Heb. 12:1: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

In discussing this subject I shall,

I. Show what race is here spoken of.

II. What is at stake.

III. The conditions of winning in this race.

I. What this race is.

In this text the apostle manifestly alludes to the Olympian and Isthmian games which were celebrated in the East, and with which his readers were familiar. As these games were extensively known, he often alludes to them, to illustrate the truths of Christianity. These games originated in the policy of government, to develop the physical powers of their subjects, and give them the greatest possible efficiency. Before gunpowder came into use, success in war depended much more than it now does upon the physical power and dexterity of an army. Armies then met hand to hand with swords, spears and war-clubs, bows and arrows, and crossbows, and all those weapons to wield which required great

physical energy and strength. Consequently it entered into the policy of governments to cultivate physical development as much as possible. For this purpose schools were established for training men to run foot-races, to handle the spear, the sword and the shield, and engage in all those exercises which serve to develop the muscular system to the utmost. In order to give great popularity to this system of exercises, these games were established and sustained by the highest civil authorities; even kings attended their celebrations. Great preparations were made for months and even years beforehand, by the most careful training of the competitors. Some of these games were foot races, it being in those times a matter of great importance that men should be able to run with great speed and for a long time. Alongside of the whole race-ground, seats were erected rising one above another, affording accommodations for an immense number of spectators. Indeed the great mass of the population of whole kingdoms was assembled on these occasions. When these seats, forming a vast amphitheater on either side, were all filled with spectators they might be called a "great cloud of witnesses."

The competitors in these games, of course made great preparations for running. Their dress, if indeed they wore any, was so arranged as to give every muscle the fullest play. Every thing was carefully avoided that might in the least prevent the freest and fullest exertion of their entire strength. They laid aside every encumbrance; exercised themselves daily; observed the utmost temperance in all their habits; in short, neglected nothing that was supposed to be conducive to their utmost speed.

Several things were to be attended to in running the race.

- 1. They must start right, or according to rule.
- 2. They must run the race through. If they started right, ran according to rule, and came out ahead of their competitors, they were crowned. Otherwise not.

Now in this passage the apostle manifestly alludes to these races, with which, comparing the Christian life, he calls it a race. The Christian life is also sometimes called a fight or battle. It is a great conflict, waged with the world, the flesh and the devil. The apostle's design is to bring out the truth that in order to be successful in winning the race, we must make the utmost exertion.

It is the Christian race then that is here spoken of, or that struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil, with which every Christian is familiar, and through which he must pass to win the crown.

II. I am to show what is at stake in this race.

The prize is a crown of eternal glory. It includes all that is honorable and glorious in heaven--to share with Christ in His glory; to sit down with Him on His throne; to become kings and priests unto God; to be God's adopted children and have mansions in His palace; to sit at His table and enjoy all the honors and blessedness of sonship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

III. The conditions of winning in this race.

The first condition mentioned in the text is, that we lay aside every weight. This race or conflict is mental, not physical; it belongs to the mind and not to the body. We inquire therefore what is to be regarded as a weight or unnecessary encumbrance in running this race; I answer,

- 1. All unnecessary business. By this I mean any kind or degree of business to which we are not manifestly called by the providence of God. Any business in kind or amount to which we are manifestly called by the providence of God, and to which we attend with a single eye to His glory, is not inconsistent with our running the race, is not to be regarded as a weight, but as a part of our business and duty as Christians, and therefore as part of the race itself. But when a man engages in any business, however great or small, to which he is not thus called, he then takes an unnecessary burden upon himself. It is a dead weight upon him--nay, he cannot run at all with this business upon him because it is selfishness, and he has already apostatized from God and gone over to the serving of himself.

He has no right to do, say, or be anything more or less than that to which God calls him. If he undertakes any selfish business, or takes any more or less upon him than duty to God requires, he is then out of God's service, and consequently can no more win in this race, than a man could win in the Olympic games if he ran right the other way, instead of running towards the goal. Let it be forever remembered that for a man to undertake any business in kind or amount which according to his best judgment is not for the glory of God and is not designed for His glory, is actual apostasy from God, and is a weight that must be laid aside or the soul cannot be saved.

- 2. Whatever draws unnecessarily upon our time is a weight that must be laid aside. All our time is God's; all to be consecrated to Him. Whatever is suffered to occupy a day, an hour, or even a moment of our time that is not demanded by our duty to God, is a weight that just so far hinders our progress in the Christian race. Suppose a racer in the Olympian games should suffer himself to be hindered by the compliments of the spectators; suppose he should stop to receive and return the salutations of his friends and acquaintance as he passed along; and thus lose time and distance instead of tasking his powers every moment--could he win the race? Now it should be forever understood that whenever a man suffers his time to run to waste, or to be desecrated from the service of God--whenever he suffers his time to be occupied with any other than God's business, he then takes upon himself a weight that must be laid aside, or he will never win the race.
- 3. All engrossments of every kind to which we are not called by the word, or Spirit, or providence of God, are to be laid entirely aside as weights. We have no business to be engrossed with anything to which we are not called by God Himself, whose servants we are. Our whole time, talents, powers, and all are His. The employment of our thoughts, and all our powers is to be entirely for Him.

Whenever therefore we take on our hands or on our minds any engrossments to which God does not call us, we have forsaken the service of God, and are employed by somebody else, or in other words we are engaged in serving ourselves instead of God. But this again renders it just as impossible to win the race, as it would be in the Olympic games if the racer should run in the opposite direction from the goal.

- 4. Whatever demands our attention, to which we are not called by God Himself, is to be given up as a weight.

God demands that we give our whole attention to His business, to glorify Him, to obey His commands and promote His interests. We have no right therefore to give any part of our attention to that to which He has not called us. Anything therefore that unnecessarily takes up the attention of our minds, that is, every thing that is not a part of God's business, must be laid aside as weights.

- 5. Whatever engrosses our affections is a weight, and must be laid aside, or we can never win the crown. God demands that our supreme affections should be placed on Himself. Whenever we suffer them to be engrossed by any other object whatever, we have then encumbered ourselves with a weight that must be laid aside.
- 6. All unnecessary cares and burdens are to be considered as weights which must be laid aside. The real wants of human beings are exceedingly simple. And in general they have but few cares, unless they unnecessarily take them upon themselves. And we have no right to load ourselves down with a multitude of cares and burdens that don't belong to the service of God. Any cares and burdens to which God calls us, we may lay on Him who careth for us. But where we engage in matters to which He does not call us, and when we take burdens which He does not impose on us, it is tempting God to pretend to lay these on Him. We must therefore assume no cares, and no burdens that we cannot cast on the Lord. Whenever we voluntarily undertake that which is a matter of perplexity, carefulness, and anxiety to which He does not call us, we are out of God's business. We have taken burdens that we cannot bear and win the race.
- 7. All unnecessary furniture and equipage are to be laid aside as a burden which we cannot bear. See! that woman has to be engaged from morning till night, to see that the useless articles of furniture and trumpery with which her house is filled, are cleaned and dusted, and in good order. She runs from room to room with her dusting cloth, or calls her hired help from room to room, to see that her chairs and bureaus, her sofas and her side boards, and a hundred other things for show and not for use are kept in due order. A great house, much furniture, a small family and little company, and a multitude of things never really needed and seldom used. O! what a burden that woman has taken upon herself, and certainly God has not called her to it. Now can she have all this unnecessary care on her mind and get to heaven? I trow (think) not. And see that man; how he struggles to get along in his Christian race with that mass of useless equipage on his back! Surely God is not so cruel as to task him to run with such a load.
- 8. The care of all unnecessary property is to be laid aside as a weight.

By unnecessary property I mean that which is not and cannot be managed for the glory of God and the good of souls. I have often thought of a remark of the celebrated Mr. Law. In discoursing upon the folly and wickedness of endeavoring to be rich, he says that a man who labors to lay up one hundred thousand pounds sterling is just as unreasonably employed as if he were endeavoring to lay up one hundred thousand pairs of boots and spurs. It would require all his time to keep them from molding, rusting, and spoiling. He would never wear but few of them and they would occupy his whole time in preserving

them. Just so with one hundred thousand pounds; a man can never use it, and it is a great deal of trouble to take care of it. He must occupy nearly his whole time in his counting room and with his books, notes, bonds, and mortgages, and musty papers, and what profit can his one hundred thousand pounds be to him? Why, it is only a burden which if he attempts to carry, will ruin his soul. All property therefore which is above a bare competency, and over and above what is sacredly consecrated to the service and glory of God, held and used for Him, is a weight that must be laid aside, or it is impossible to win the crown.

- 9. All unnecessary articles of dress are to be regarded as weights. Where a man or woman has a large wardrobe to over-haul, and see to, much wearing apparel to be cleansed and aired, and altered, and attended to, it engrosses the thoughts, takes up the time, is an object of care, and a weight that must be laid aside.
- 10. Fashion is another weight that must be laid aside. What a multitude are busy a great part of their time, as the different seasons follow each other in rapid succession and as the ever fluctuating fashions are introduced, in altering their dresses, making changes, getting new ones and disposing of old ones, running here and there shopping, conversing about the newest fashions, the most tasteful colors, the best milliners, and mantua-makers and tailors, and all the world of gossip and folly which engages the world of fashionables. Who can run the Christian race with a mind filled with such things as these? Who does not perceive at once that persons thus engaged are not consecrated to God? God has never called them to this service and these engrossments. This is selfishness and must ruin the soul. And it is impossible ever to win a crown of glory by living such a life as this.
- 11. Unnecessary attendance upon company is often a great weight. It is often a great tax on a person's time to receive such a multitude of calls and complimentary visits, and have so many protracted conversations inflicted upon us as is often the case. Christians should always make their arrangements, so as to dispense as far as possible with all unnecessary company. They should be ever ready to exercise hospitality to the utmost of their ability, should receive their friends and be cordial in entertaining strangers, but withal should discountenance all unnecessary drafts on their time in any way whatever. It should be remembered that all waiting on company, receiving and entertaining company, or making visits for company's sake, to which we are not manifestly called by the providence and will of God, is a weight that must be laid aside.
- 12. All unnecessary reading is also to be laid aside. By unnecessary reading I mean all reading that is not necessary to our highest usefulness and well-being. Everything that is over and above this we are not called to, by the will of God. It absorbs our attention, is a waste of time, and often much worse than a waste, as it encumbers our minds with a multitude of things that are inconsistent with our highest holiness and usefulness.
- 13. All unnecessary conversation is to be regarded as a weight. It is surely a great burden to be obliged to keep our tongues from running. Many persons seem to talk for talk's sake, and to gratify a loquacious spirit. And they will often intrude upon you with some protracted conversation about nothing or that which is as good as nothing, greatly to the hindrance of your

spiritual life. Now it should be remembered that our tongues are to be used only to the glory of God, and to the use of edifying, that for every idle word we must give an account in the day of judgment.

All unnecessary conversation should therefore be avoided as entirely inconsistent with growth in grace, and with running our spiritual race. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

- 14. Everything in short to which we are not providentially called and which is not therefore a part of our duty as Christians, would be regarded as a weight and be laid aside. Whatever is inconsistent with or not conducive to our highest usefulness should be regarded as a weight, and at once laid aside.
- 15. There is another thing to which I must call attention that may be regarded as rather of a delicate nature, I mean all untimely and unsuitable love affairs. Few things more completely engross the mind than love affairs among young people. Now, whenever circumstances are such that the providence of God makes it a duty to seek a wife, or to become a wife, these things are lawful, may be committed to God and attended to without distraction. But whenever the affections are engrossed with such affairs, where there is no call in providence to such a course, it is a grievous weight that must be laid aside. Oh! how much time is spent in brooding over such matters, in reading letters, and in all the multitude of engrossments of thought and feeling, and all the powers of the mind. These things must be laid aside, they don't belong to the service of God, because in the case supposed, there is no providential call for the mind's being given up to such matters; indeed where the mind is thus given up without consulting God and without being called in the course of divine providence to turn the attention in this direction, it is a real abandonment of the service of God, and making provision for the flesh. It is a real heart apostasy. It is an endeavor to please ourselves and not God. To win the crown in this way is impossible. Indeed the object is not to win a crown, but to win a lady; to win a wife or a husband, and that too, not for the glory of God, but to make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

A second condition on which we can win in this race is that we lay aside all our besetting sins. A besetting sin is one to which on account of our constitution, or circumstance or both, we are peculiarly exposed, and into which we most easily and most frequently fall. Among these are;

- 1. Ill temper. This is one of the most easily besetting sins of most people. On account of their constitution or health or circumstance it is remarkable to see how many persons frequently become angry. This is a sin which so easily besets many persons, that they seem to be thrown out of balance, and to get angry, and often times to be filled with wrath on the slightest occasions. This must be laid aside.
- 2. Fretfulness is another easily besetting sin. This is anger but in a milder form. It is a peevish, passionate state of mind. Many persons who will seldom be filled with wrath or manifest what is generally called anger, are, nevertheless, extremely given to fretting. This must be laid aside.

- 3. Covetousness is another easily besetting sin. This is selfishness in a peculiar form. Some persons seem to lust after or to covet every thing they see, especially every thing that is a little superior to what they have themselves. A horse, a carriage, a farm, a house, a dress, or anything which exceeds their own things, they covet; little realizing that this is an easily besetting sin. Now all these desires indulged, are entirely inconsistent with running the Christian race. And whoever will notice the operations of his own mind, will find they always destroy his peace of mind, and communion with God. And whenever men indulge the wish of having this, or that, or the other thing, to the possession of which God does not call them, they are always out of the way, and should thrust such temptations entirely aside, or they can never run the Christian race.

Some persons seem never to be satisfied with what they have, but are always lusting after more and better things, just as long as any of their acquaintances have them. As the scripture says, "They enlarge their desire as hell." Now God often gives them their desire, but sends leanness into their souls. Have you never observed this, that when you have set your heart very much on having something which you did not possess, when you get it, it is a snare to your soul, engrosses your thoughts and time, and leads you away from God?

- 4. Another easily besetting sin is avarice. Avarice is a disposition to hoard up property. Some persons are so much disposed to this sin, that an opportunity to make a good bargain, a speculation, is a great temptation to them. There is a constant tendency in their minds to selfishness in this form. But this must be restrained and put away, or we shall never get to heaven.
- 5. Dishonesty is another easily besetting sin. Some persons find it extremely difficult to be upright and honest in what they say and do. They are tempted to little, petty frauds and over-reachings in almost everything, and frequently fall before these temptations. They are not sincere and honest with themselves in their religious matters, nor upright with God. In short, they strongly tend to a hypocritical state of mind. We cannot run a Christian race successfully without putting this entirely away.
- 6. Falsehood is another easily besetting sin of many people. They do not seem to possess a truthful spirit. They do not appear to love truth for its own sake, but are very prone to give a false coloring to almost every thing they say. The lights and shades are thrown in at their own discretion, in such a way as to make a false impression. Now this sin so easily besets some people, that I never know exactly what to believe from what they say.
- 7. Trespassing on other's rights, is another easily besetting sin. It is astonishing to see what a tendency there is in some minds to trespass on other's grounds, by crossing their field perhaps with a team without permission, leaving down their fences, and committing trespasses on their rights in a great variety of ways, apparently without the least compunction of conscience. They go into their neighbor's land and get timber for wood and other purposes without leave, which is really stealing. Indeed it is surprising to see to what an extent many persons will go in disregarding the rights of those about them. They seem to be supremely selfish, and almost supremely reckless, and to go just as far as they think they can without its destroying their character, or reacting on them in a lawsuit. A person of this spirit can no more get to heaven than Satan can, unless he lay aside this state of mind, and cherish a most sacred regard for his

neighbor's rights.

- 8. Unfaithfulness in business is another easily besetting sin of many persons. They are not faithful to God in their own business, and never pay that sacred regard to it which their duty to God requires. They do not seem to understand that they are the clerks and agents of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He expects in them the most entire promptness and faithfulness. They are exceedingly loose, and reckless, and inattentive to business. If they are employed by others as clerks, agents, or laborers, either within doors or without, they are eye-servants, feeling little or no responsibility, attending to nothing only for the sake of wages. They are thus exceedingly unfaithful to their employers and to God, and never can get to heaven with such a state of mind as this. It is sheer selfishness and injustice, and anything but religion.
- 9. Slothfulness is another easily besetting sin of many persons. Multitudes are really too lazy to be religious. Every where in the bible the Christian life is represented as a race, a conflict, that to which the utmost attention must be given, and about which all the faculties of the mind are to be strenuously employed. It is represented as a life of the utmost activity; as much so as the foot races and conflicts in the games to which the text alludes. Now can a slothful person get to heaven? No. All the winds, and waves, and tides of this world's influence set right towards hell, and nothing but girding up our loins and addressing our whole being to the work, will ever enable us to stem the tides, overcome the obstacles, win the prize, and plant our feet on the hills of glory.
- 10. Tale bearing is another besetting sin of many persons. God has said, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among the children of my people." There are some persons that seem to be so big with every secret which they may chance to know, that they are in agony till they can run about and tell it. They are in the habit of running up and down to tell the news. They are literally tale-bearers. They carry not the newspapers, but the unwritten gossip of the village and the neighbors. Such a person is a pest to society and a sinner, and must lay aside this easily besetting sin if he would ever get to heaven.
- 11. Evil speaking is another easily besetting sin. By evil speaking I mean, speaking of the real or supposed faults of others behind their backs; speaking that which is to their discredit, without being plainly called to it by providence. This is really slander in the spirit of it, whether the things spoken are true or false. It is totally inconsistent with the law of love, in doing by others as we would they should do to us. Consequently it is a sin, and with many an easily besetting sin. It must be laid aside or the race can never be won.
- 12. Levity is another easily besetting sin. Some persons, and indeed many persons are so much given to jesting, tittering, laughing, and idle gossip as not only to dissipate all the solemnity of their own minds, but to be sore temptations to all around them. Levity of mind is exceedingly inconsistent with the Christian religion. Triflers do not get to heaven. Let that be always remembered, and if you are given to this folly, lay it aside or you will lose your soul.
- 13. Envy is another easily besetting sin of many persons. When they see others rising above themselves in wealth, influence, intellectual or moral improvement; when they see others more

beautiful, more humble, or more esteemed than themselves, they lust to envy. This shows a state of mind entirely inconsistent with the love of God and our neighbor. It must be entirely laid aside, denounced, and repented of as sin, or it can never be forgiven.

- 14. Jealousy is an easily besetting sin of many persons. By this I mean a suspicious temper. Some persons are exceedingly given to it. They seem to be constantly on the watch to see if they are not in some way slighted, if some other persons are not preferred to them, if something is not kept a secret from them which others are led to know. This state of mind manifests itself in a thousand ways, and is always a hateful temper, and must be laid aside as a besetting sin.
- 15. Ambition is an easily besetting sin of many persons. This sin takes on a great many forms. It often manifests itself among students, in a desire to rise above others in their class in the esteem of their teachers, in intellectual developments. It is a hydra-headed sin, and seems to be common to a great many persons, from the emperor on his throne, down to the slave who labors in his chains. You will see it in the common school, the college, the theological seminary, the pulpit, at the bar, on the bench, behind the counter, on a military field, everywhere where human beings are. This must be put away.
- 16. Intemperance in eating, is an easily besetting sin of great multitudes of persons. When a person eats more in quantity, or that in quality which is inconsistent with the laws of life and health he is guilty of intemperance. Intemperate eating is as really a sin, as intemperate drinking, and as really inconsistent with salvation.
- 17. Intemperate drinking. There is such a thing as drinking water intemperately, at times and in quantities which are exceedingly injurious to health. All use of stimulating drinks which is inconsistent with the most healthful operations of all the functions of life, is intemperance. God commands us to be temperate in all things. But it has come to pass in these days, that nothing is regarded as intemperance, but some of the most flagrant forms of it; such as the use of intoxicating drinks. Let it be remembered that every violation of the laws of life and health, to which we are not called by the providence of God, is intemperance. A man may be so circumstanced as to be under the necessity of both eating and drinking things that are not naturally wholesome, of exercising or resting under circumstances that will violate the laws of life and health. But when providence calls to this, it is not sin, and therefore is not the sin of intemperance.
- 18. Pride in vanity and dress, is another easily besetting sin. Persons are always guilty of this, when they put on that which they would not indulge in, were they expecting to receive a personal visit from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 19. All fleshly indulgences are sins, and with most persons easily besetting sins. We are required to make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God, and not for the sake of gratifying our appetites and passions. Self-indulgence is always selfishness and always sin. The spirit of self seeking, and self-indulgence must be put away, and whatever we do must be done from a higher motive than to please and gratify ourselves.

- 20. Unbelief is another easily besetting sin; none more common, and none more fatal than this. How infinitely strange it is, that this should be an easily besetting sin. It shows the great degradation of fallen human nature. That we should so basely distrust infinite truth, and disbelieve Him whom we acknowledge cannot lie. This is the grossest of all absurdities, and the most unreasonable of all abominations in the world, and yet seems to be the most easily besetting sin of all mankind. But it must be put away, or damnation is certain.
- 21. Every neglect of duty must be put away, or we cannot be saved. Some persons are ready to acknowledge that such and such things are their duty, but they will make the acknowledgment with entire indifference, while they neglect the duty. Now this course is as fatal as death itself. How can they be saved who acknowledge their obligations, and yet refuse to discharge them? who make their religion consist rather in confessing that they do not do their duty, than in discharging it? This will not do. Christ will not be satisfied with our confessing what we ought to do, and that we do not do it. Shall we recklessly turn away from what we ought, and do that which we ought not to do? It is true that confession is a duty; but who so confesseth and forsaketh, shall have mercy.

The third condition on which the race may be won is that we start right.

- 1. The first thing is to be born again. Unless persons are truly regenerated by the Spirit of God, they run in vain. For in fact, they are not in the way. They are running in a wrong direction altogether, and of course will run in vain.

The fourth condition is that you run lawfully.

- 1. You must keep the commandments of Christ. You must live a life of faith on the Son of God. You must learn to walk by faith and not by sight. Christ everywhere makes obedience to His commandments the only evidence of acceptance with Him. The Apostle says, and in other places it is asserted, that they that run in a race are not crowned except they run lawfully, that is, according to the rules of the races. Nor shall we win the prize unless we comply with Christ's directions. He is the judge. So run therefore that you may obtain.

The fifth condition of winning the prize is perseverance to the end. The Bible everywhere conditionates salvation on perseverance in holiness to the end of life. So does the text--"And run with patience, that is, perseverance, the race that is set before us." Let this be ever remembered.

The sixth condition is deep earnestness and honesty in religion. No man will, according to Christ's direction, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, make this the first and the great business of his life, unless he is deeply honest and in earnest on the subject.

The seventh condition is entire consecration of our lives to the service and glory of God. Nothing short of entire consecration is real honesty and hearty sincerity in the work.

REMARKS.

1. It is fatal to encumber ourselves with any thing that is inconsistent with a holy, spiritual life. Anything that is inconsistent with our daily walking with God, is entirely inconsistent with our obtaining salvation.

2. From this subject we can see the madness and folly of great multitudes of professors of religion. What would be thought of a racer in the Olympic games who should load himself down with sand, or clay, or iron, or copper, or silver or gold, or should impede the action of his muscles by tight dressing and lacing? Or suffering his time or thoughts to be engrossed with things entirely inconsistent with his making the utmost exertion. Now it appears to me that a great many professors of religion misapprehend the true nature of religion, and what is indispensable to their ever obtaining a crown of glory, Here is one man running the Christian race with an enormous load of unnecessary business on his back; and here is a woman attempting to run the Christian race laced up in such a manner as to be entirely unable to make any exertion. Should she attempt to make any extraordinary exertions, she would fail for want of breath. She has loaded herself down with trinkets and everything that is inconvenient for the race set before her. There is a man with his enormous pockets full of silver and gold, with an immense bundle of papers under his arm, a tin chest of bonds and mortgages, certificates of bank stock, and multitudes of things strapped on his back. There is another trying to run the Christian race, and driving a whole company of negro slaves before him. He is determined to get to glory, and not to leave his slave property behind. There is another with a monstrous brewing establishment, and another with a whiskey distillery on his shoulders. And in short, we see the racers coming on to the ground, with every variety of fantastic encumbrance on them--with all the weights and besetting sins that the devil could desire them to have, in order to prevent their winning the prize. Now let me say that the conduct of such professors of religion is not only most unreasonable, but so highly ridiculous as to be a mere burlesque on the Christian religion. It is the greatest libel and stumbling block that can be conceived.

3. Until you are prepared to make every needed sacrifice, to cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye if it causes you to offend, you are never likely to win in this race.

4. You see the importance of counting the cost. It will cost you much to be truly religious. You can obtain a hope. You can pass for a Christian. You can gain a reputation with a worldly church, of being a disciple of Christ. But mark well what I say and what Christ says, except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be a disciple of Christ's. Selfishness under every form and in every degree must be cut up root and branch and put away entirely and forever, or you will make shipwreck of your soul.

5. From this subject we see the misery of creating such a multitude of artificial wants among mankind, and the necessity of simplifying as much as possible all our business and all our domestic arrangements, so as to leave the mind as unembarrassed as possible, and to give ourselves as much time as we need to cultivate that deep spirituality which is indispensable to salvation.

6. We see the folly of undertaking responsibilities to which we are not plainly called by our Heavenly Father. These are not things with which we should encumber ourselves, let them be what they may. We should never suffer ourselves to be brought into circumstances of responsibility, to which we are not plainly called in providence. If we do, these will assuredly be stumbling blocks to us. We cannot pray for the blessing, and direction and support of God; and without His direction and support we

shall fall, and make shipwreck of our souls.

7. The doctrine of this discourse is not to be admitted merely as a matter of theory, and we cannot get to heaven by merely saying this is true, and we ought to do so and so and then go as we have done. But let it be understood, we must really and in fact lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience--or, as it should have been rendered, perseverance, the race that is set before us. To acknowledge the obligation and not to comply with it, is fatal. Let this always be understood; when we acknowledge our duty, we must do it, or we have no right to expect the crown. Beloved, let us see to this.

Rejoicing in Boastings

Lecture V

March 26, 1845

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--James 4:16: "But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil."

In discussing this subject I shall show,

I. When one may be said to rejoice in his boastings.

II. The wickedness of such boastings.

I. When one may be said to rejoice in his boastings.

- 1. When we have a self-complacent spirit. For example, when we feel a self-complacent joy in view of our worldly prosperity; when we look on our worldly prosperity as resulting from our own providence, prudence, economy or goodness, without giving the glory to God as the Author and Giver of every perfect gift. When we do not recognize Him as not only ordering the outward circumstances, but as giving such directions to our thoughts and efforts as to secure this prosperity. If our worldly prosperity has been brought about in a manner consistent with honesty and Christian integrity, God is of course to have the glory of so working providentially without us, and so working by His Spirit within us to will and to do, as to have secured this result; so that the glory belongs to Him. It is grace which has secured this result, and what have we that we did not receive? And who has made us in this respect to differ from others? Why then should we boast, and be self-complacent? Why should we take credit to ourselves, as if these things were not a gift? Whenever we do so, we rejoice in our boastings. But if our worldly

prosperity has resulted from any dishonesty whatever, then of course to indulge in self-complacency, is not only to rejoice in our boastings, but to rejoice in our villany.

- 2. To indulge in a spirit of self-complacency on account of our influence in the world is rejoicing in our boastings.

First, because if our influence is great and good, grace working within us, by the Spirit, and providentially without us, has secured this result, and all the merit we can claim is that we yielded, or suffered ourselves to be persuaded by the infinite entreaties and persuasion of God to do our duty. Being as it were over-persuaded, we yielded, and when our reluctance was overcome, we consented to take the course that has given us this influence, and in this sense alone have we any reason to be self-complacent.

But in how much higher sense does all the glory belong to God, who from His own self-originated goodness set Himself to persuade us, and persevered until He did persuade us to take such a course as secured this influence. What reason then have we for self-complacency? Verily, none at all. And whenever we indulge it on account of our influence we rejoice in our boastings.

But if our influence is evil, to be self-complacent in that, is not only to rejoice in our boastings but to boast of our shameless wickedness.

- 3. When we are self-complacent on account of our intellectual attainments. If they are great, or whatever they are, it is a gift of God. He created our intellect. He has so arranged His providences as to give us opportunity to cultivate it. He has also by His providence without, and His working within, secured the application of our minds in such a manner as to develop our intelligence. And now in what sense have we a right to be self-complacent? Have we studied hard? It is because He has so constituted us, so arranged His providences, and all the circumstances of the case, as to persuade us to study hard. He has overcome our sluggishness, and pressed us onward by ten thousand influences without and within us, and secured this result. And now, do we take the credit to ourselves? Verily this is rejoicing in our boastings.
- 4. When we indulge self-complacency in regard to our spiritual attainments, we rejoice in our boastings.

But I am almost ready to say that these things are incompatible: that is, that self-complacency in respect to our spiritual attainments, would demonstrate that we have made no spiritual attainments at all. But it is undoubtedly true that sometimes persons who have made some spiritual attainments, afterwards become self-complacent, and develop a disgusting amount of spiritual pride, or which is the same thing, rejoicing in their boastings. Buy why should we be self-complacent on account of any degree of spiritual attainments? We were totally dead in trespasses and sins. God began a work within us by first convicting us, creating desires, setting aside our cavils with all long-suffering, and persevering in the midst of all our obstinacy, rebellion, and sin, and using the most persuasive means to obtain our consent to be spiritual at all. He has never gained one step with us only by pressing us with truths and providences, so arranging His

providences without and so enlightening us by His Spirit within, as to overcome our utter reluctance, enmity, and spiritual death, and after a protracted struggle, at last to gain our consent to follow Him and be saved. His Spirit has never succeeded in making us spiritually-minded, any farther than He has anticipated all our movements toward Himself, by first moving toward us, and beginning to call up our attention and press us with such considerations as to overcome our apathy, enmity, and unbelief, and finally succeeded in bringing forth the voluntary result of our present degree of spirituality. Prompted by His own sovereign goodness, He has thus moved on us, worked in us to will and to do--surrounded us without and enlightened us within, and at last got our consent. Now I ask, how much reason have we for self-complacency? And in how low a sense can it be said that we are worthy of praise? True we have been free. But it is also true that our liberty has been abused and used only in opposition to God, until finally overcome with His persevering and overpowering persuasions. True, we have done our duty at last. But why have we done it? Because God in the abundance of His grace has persevered till He has over-persuaded us, and finally wrung out from us our consent.

But observe in how much higher sense does the glory belong to God than to us. Verily instead of being self-complacent we have reason to take to ourselves the utmost shame that it should cost God all this effort to overcome our reluctance, and persuade us to do our duty. Are we to ascribe glory to ourselves, to be self-complacent, to plume ourselves, and rejoice in our own goodness? It is infinitely more reasonable to hide our faces in the dust, and to say we are unprofitable servants. We have only done that which it was our duty to do, and even that we have not done only as we have been overcome by the persuasions and pleadings of infinite and persevering goodness.

- o Again. When we give ourselves up to rejoicing in our spiritual state, instead of rejoicing in God, we always rejoice in our boastings. I have seen persons who seem to me to be watching their spiritual state, and to be contemplating their own feelings, with a kind of self-complacency, from day to day. They remind me of a peacock when he struts in the sun-beams, and turns his head from side to side and views his gorgeous tail. He seem to delight himself in his own beauty and to be taken up with rejoicing in the glory of his own appearance. He struts and seems to say, "What is so beautiful as this? Am I not the most beautiful of birds? And have I not more reason to carry my head high than any others of the feathered tribe? Indeed I am quite satisfied with my own exquisite beauty." Now some persons seem to be taken up in the same way. They have worked themselves into a kind of ecstasy; have got certain views, as they say, of Christ that have brought their sensibility into a very happy state. They seem to be saying, "God I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, that I am not in bondage like this legalist." In words they ascribe the glory to God, just as the Pharisee must have done who is contrasted with the publican. It must be that in theory at least he ascribed his pretended goodness to God; else he could not have thanked God that he was so good, for why should he have thanked God unless in theory at least he ascribed his righteousness to God? "God," he says, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." Now I have seen some that appeared to be precisely in this state of mind from day to day. Instead of rejoicing in God, they seem to be taken up with their own state of mind. They are contemplating what they call their own peace and their own goodness. The state of their sensibility is with them the

chief subject of attention, and source of self-complacency. While they are practically inefficient in the kingdom of God and are doing nothing to pull sinners out of the fire or to sanctify the saints, they still have a wonderful degree of self-complacency on account of their state of mind. Now this is nothing but rejoicing in their boastings. How infinitely different from the publican, who, standing afar off, and not daring so much as to lift up his eyes to heaven, smote upon his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." By this I do not intend to teach that a man must be conscious all the while of committing sin in order to be accepted of God, or that a sense of our sinfulness is in itself an evidence that we are accepted of God. But I do mean that a person in a right state of mind is never taken up with a self-complacent view of his goodness. But his rejoicings are always in God and never in himself.

- o Again, when we cherish self-complacency on account of our usefulness, we rejoice in our boastings. If we have been useful, to whom does the glory belong? If any good has been done through us, by whom has it been done? Has God done this, or have we done it? If we have so much as intended to do any good, God has begotten and perpetuated in us this intention. If this intention has been carried out, and has secured the desired result, why do we glory? It is God who has worked within and without. He has moved us to these efforts, and He has secured these results. What though we have been free, yet He has over-persuaded us to use our liberty as we have. Nothing but the most strenuous efforts on the part of God have ever secured in us an effort to do anything good. He has overcome our reluctance, He has put away our slothfulness, He has quickened our death, and surrounded us, within and without, with such influences as to lead us in this way in spite of all the natural tendency of our minds in an opposite direction. Surely, if any good has been done, the glory belongs to God. Shame and confusion of face belongs to us, that it has been so difficult for God to persuade us even to intend any good. What though we did at last intend it: what though He finally prevailed on us: let us take shame rather than praise to ourselves. Surely God has done it. He has worked in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, and with great pains taking, has, through us, wrought some good results. And are we indulging ourselves in self-complacency in consequence of some good which has resulted from our labors? Shame, where is thy blush? All such rejoicings are rejoicings in our boastings.
- o Again, we rejoice in our boastings whenever we congratulate ourselves on account of the high stand we have taken on any moral question. If the stand we have taken be right, who has secured this result? Where should we have gone if not led and overcome by grace divine? Has not God paved all the way, guided us by His eye, lifted us up with His hands, and brought all the influences to bear, both within and without us, that have finally over-persuaded us, and brought us to take right grounds? And are we the persons to be self-complacent? What if a man who was bent on murder should with the greatest possible pains-taking be persuaded to relinquish his object, and then plume himself on his virtue in abstaining from the bloody deed? Ought he not rather to say, "'God be merciful to me a sinner!" It was in my heart to have committed this horrible deed, and hadst Thou not over-persuaded me by Thy goodness, confounded and broken me down, and turned me away from this infernal project, my hands had now been red with a brother's blood!

Be sure the glory all belongs to God."

So it is with whatever right ground is taken by us on any subject. Instead of being self-complacent, it becomes us rather to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It was in our hearts to have said and done anything else than what was right -- to have taken any other stand than a right one. But, O Lord, Thou hast persuaded us, and we have suffered ourselves to be persuaded.

- Again, whenever we complacently regard ourselves as the objects of divine favor, we rejoice in our boastings. Suppose God blesses us, gives us His Spirit, makes us useful, enlarges us in any respect, and we feel self-complacent on this account, and rejoice in it as if He had blessed us on account of our own goodness, and intended to bear a testimony of our favor; this is rejoicing in our boastings. Why may not the veriest sinner that was ever converted take the same ground, and say that God has converted him because he was so good, or the veriest backslider that was ever reclaimed say that God has given him reclaiming grace because he was so good, and acceptable to God in his backslidings? The fact is, whenever we regard God's favors as a testimony of our own goodness, or as being bestowed on us on account of our own worthiness, we are always rejoicing in our boastings. All favors bestowed on us, are bestowed for an infinitely different reason, only for the sake of Him who died for us and rose again.
- Again, when we fail to recognize the fact that it is not for our sakes, but for His own name's sake that we receive anything from His hand better than hell, we are rejoicing in our boastings. We have deserved nothing but a dire damnation, and He takes particular pains to say to us, it is "not for your sakes, be it known unto you that I do these things, but for My great name's sake;" and whenever we fail to recognize this truth, and indulge a self-complacent spirit on account of any favors received, whether temporal or spiritual, we are always rejoicing in our boastings.
- Again, whenever we fail to recognize the fact that He works all our goodness in us, and that too in spite of our natural obstinacy, and determination to have our own way. When I speak of His working love or goodness in us, I do not mean to imply that we are not free, moral agents. I do not mean that we are not in a sense co-workers with Him, for we really are, voluntarily; and the way in which He works in us is as I have already intimated, by over-persuading us, over-coming us by His powerful persuasions, and drawing us by these in an opposite direction from that in which we should have gone, if we had been left to ourselves, so that in every instance, in which we are conscious of doing our duty, we are to know assuredly that we should not have done it unless God by His grace had secured this result in us in spite of all our natural obstinacy and tendency in an opposite direction.
- Again, whenever we fail to recognize all the good done to others through our instrumentality as being so absolutely God's work through the agency of His Spirit in us, and with us that we have no ground whatever for the least glory or self-complacency.
- Again, whenever with self-complacency we compare ourselves with others in any

respect. It is reported of Whitfield, that on seeing a poor drunkard reeling along the streets, he exclaimed with tears, "But for the grace of God, there goes George Whitfield." Paul could say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Now in whatever respect we may be better than others, in better circumstances outwardly, or in a better state inwardly, we have no reason whatever for boasting. "Who hath made you to differ from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" says Paul. "But if thou didst receive it, why boastest thou thyself as if thou hast not received it?" If we are better than others, it is only because God has in His wisdom and benevolence secured this result. It was not because we were any better by nature, for we belong to the mass of fallen humanity. We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others, we are only brands plucked out of the burning, are only a little clay, taken from the common lump and molded by the Potter, and are in no respect better, more praise-worthy than others, even the vilest of mankind, only as divine grace has overcome our downward tendency, and over-persuaded us until we have been subdued, and at last given our consent to be thus molded. Brethren, did you see that vile drunkard lying there in the ditch? Did you see his bloated face, his blood-shot eyes, his almost naked carcass rotting in the gutter? As soon as he could speak did you hear him swear and blaspheme? Now mark me, brother; but for the grace of God that is yourself. Had not the grace and sovereign goodness of God surrounded you, wrought within you and without you, to secure different results, you had today been like him, or perhaps even worse. And if you are not as degraded and wicked and miserable, as any sinner either in or out of hell, no thanks to you. You have no reason for self-complacency. God has brought this about, and all that you can say is that He wrought you over with His grace and His providence, within and without you, till He at last secured your consent.

Woman; are you priding yourself on your modesty, chastity, your comeliness without, or purity within? See that vile harlot. She sits before you on the curb-stone of one of our great cities. She is drunk. She has lost her bonnet, her shoes. She is ragged, polluted, disgraced, profane, a wretch too loathsome to look upon, and too degraded to be thought of without disgust. Now mark me, but for the sovereign grace of God you had been in that harlot's place. To be sure you have been free and voluntary in all your ways. But O! had not sovereign grace been busy arranging all the elements without you, and keeping up a busy play of thought and motive within you; had not God plied you with ten thousand moving considerations, arranged all His plans from eternity, laid all His trains, pressed every consideration and brought about things as He has until He has really persuaded you and overcome your reluctance, where had you been but in the gutter, in a brothel or in hell today? And now mark me again, in what respect soever any man or woman is any better in character or in any better circumstances than the damned in hell, the vilest of the vile, the most dissolute of the dissolute, the most profane of the profane, the most abominable of the abominable, it is owing to the grace of God only. Grace has persuaded you to all this, and all the virtue you have is, that after great reluctance, you have barely suffered yourselves to be persuaded. Now is it for you or me to be self-complacent, to boast ourselves above others, to take the Pharisee's place and thank God on

account of our own goodness? Shall we boast of our prudence on our worldly affairs, or of our efforts in our spiritual affairs? Shall we look around on the world of mankind and breathe out a selfish complacent breath, or shall we cry out, "God be merciful to us, sinners." "But for Thy glorious sovereign and preserving grace, we should have been as wicked and as miserable as any of the damned in hell."

Whenever we take credit for being better than the worst, or less miserable than the most miserable, whenever we indulge the least self-complacency in the comparison of ourselves with any other human beings, or even with any devils in hell, we are rejoicing in our boastings.

- Again, when we ascribe to our own wisdom or prudence any success which may attend our efforts in any direction, we are rejoicing in our boastings. Who has developed this wisdom and prudence? And who has directed us in this way, and secured this result? Verily God! And to Him belongs all the glory.
- Again, when we ascribe to our own virtue the avoidance of any crime, we are rejoicing in our boastings. Whenever we say we should not have been guilty of such and such a crime, or that we should have done thus and thus, which is better than others have done, and have the least self-complacency in these sayings, we don't know ourselves. We are abusing God. We are rejoicing in our boastings.
- Again, when we have the slightest confidence in ourselves we should do any good, that we should avoid any crime, in short, when we have the slightest confidence in ourselves, in any respect whatever, we are rejoicing in our boastings. For surely we can be depended on for nothing but to sin, and only sin, and that continually, if left to ourselves. And in just so far as we fail to recognize this fact, we rejoice in our boastings. If we imagine that there is anything within us that is any part of ourselves, or for which we have the least occasion to boast, that can secure us against any crime however horrid, we are deceiving ourselves, and are rejoicing in our own boastings.
- Again, when we have any confidence at all in the efficiency of our own resolutions, and purposes of good. Whenever we comfort ourselves with the idea that these purposes of ours, will secure any good result whatever unsustained by the grace of God, we are deceived and playing the fool, and are rejoicing in our boastings.
- Again, whenever we fall short of recognizing the fact that in us apart from grace, there dwelleth no good thing--that whatever attainment we may have made in holiness, still holiness could not live in us except as it is constantly sustained by the divine presence and energy, we deceive ourselves. If we imagine that any attainments in holiness are so thoroughly made, that any virtue is so lodged within us, that it will live a moment if the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, we are deceived. And whenever we comfort ourselves with any such ideas as these, we are rejoicing in our boastings.
- Again, when we overlook the fact that all our tendencies are downward, away from

heaven, away from God and towards the depths of hell, we are deceiving ourselves.

- Again, whenever we fall short of what the most spiritual saints call self-annihilation, in respect to everything that is good, we are rejoicing in our boastings. By self-annihilation in this connection, is not meant that we are not active agents in obeying God; but that our activity and free agency are so overruled and directed by the grace of God, working without and within us as to secure a result which is the opposite of what had taken place, but for this divine agency.

II. Show the wickedness of rejoicing in our boastings.

- 1. It is wicked because it is rejoicing in a most pernicious falsehood. It is infinitely far from true that we have any good reason for self-complacency. On the other hand it is true that we have infinite reason to be ashamed of our wickedness, our great and astonishing aversion both to do and to be anything which we ought to do or be. And for us to rejoice in ourselves, is a rejoice in our boastings. The least degree of self-complacency in us, is infinitely inconsistent with reason and truth.
 - Again, it is wicked because it is unjust to take credit to ourselves. The praise belongs to God. All goodness originates with Him. He has at the greatest expense and with the greatest pains-taking barely secured our consent; and shall we after all this persuasion pride ourselves for being barely overcome by His strong persuasions and influences, so that we merely consent to do our duty?
 - Again, this is wicked because it is really robbing God of His glory; that is, it is attempting to rob Him, and is taking credit to ourselves where the credit belongs to Him only.
 - Again, for us to take the credit to ourselves, is denying the work and grace of the Holy Spirit.
 - Again, it is overlooking and denying the providence of God without and the grace of God within, that has secured all these results.
 - Again, it is a virtual denial of the Bible. For the Bible takes the ground that we have no reason for self-complacency, but infinite reason for humiliation and self-loathing.
 - Again, all self-complacency is spiritual pride, is infinitely unreasonable and odious in the sight of God. It is setting aside the gospel and is opposition to God.

REMARKS.

1. It is very important to understand the views of inspired writers on this subject. Hear Paul, "I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Again, "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," and not by my own faith. Inspired writers seem fully to have recognized the truth of this discourse, and everywhere insist that God works all our good works

in us; that it is God that works in us to will and do of His own good pleasure; and in short, that it is sovereign almighty grace that secures all human virtue.

2. There is a great deal of rejoicing in our boastings. It is amazing to see how much of this there is of which persons are not themselves aware. The egotism and filthy boasting with which the world and even the church are filled, must be infinitely disgusting and abominable in the sight of God.

3. It is to be feared that there is a great deal of this boasting in spirit, where there is but little of it in form. Often, no doubt, much is ascribed in words to the grace of God, of which men give the glory to themselves and not to God.

4. No person gets clear of rejoicing in his boastings, unless he apprehends what it is to be "in Christ Jesus;" to live by the faith of the Son of God. To have that faith, patience, love, meekness, gentleness, goodness, and all the graces of Christ developed within himself until he understands what it is to put off self and put on Christ in the sense of becoming dead to his own goodness, and alive only in the life and activity of Jesus Christ.

5. Again, I remark that just in proportion as persons become really holy, they are indisposed to take any credit to themselves. Nothing is more offensive and infinitely abominable, shocking, and disgusting to a sanctified soul than self-complacency. Every shade and every degree of it is loathsome as the very filth of hell.

6. It is often very difficult to speak exactly the language of our own feelings and sentiments on this subject. We find Paul, as it were, often over-hauling himself. When he has spoken of himself as being good, or as having done anything good, he speaks as if he would take it back, and say--not I, not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me.

7. From this subject it is easy to see how Christians get into darkness. Whenever they indulge in the least self-complacency in any respect, they sin, grieve the Spirit of God, and get into darkness. Oftentimes they seem to be entirely ignorant of the cause of their darkness. They look around and ask wherein they have sinned. Finding nothing in their outward conduct to accuse themselves of, they are at a great loss to account of this spiritual desertion. Now if they would but direct their minds to thoughts and feelings indulged, they would often learn that they have been at least dividing the glory and praise of their goodness with God. They have been stealing from God. They have been secretly filching a jewel from the diadem of Christ, and would fain place it as a crown on their own head.

8. Spiritual pride, or rejoicing in our boastings is one of the most common forms of backsliding. How few persons there are that can bear prosperity, temporal or spiritual, without indulging in self-complacency, and thus grieving away the Spirit of God. This no doubt, more frequently than anything else, causes the young convert to stumble. He stumbles without knowing at what he stumbles. He becomes spiritually proud without observing it. He rejoices in his own boastings, and falls, and sadly dishonors God.

9. Revivals of religion are more frequently put down by this sin than by any other. The minister and the lay brethren are powerfully moved by divine grace, and bestir themselves. God pours out His

Spirit and a revival ensues. Directly they begin to be self-complacent. God is blessing their labors. They begin to tell what I have done, and what I have done, and how God blessed me in this labor and in that -- how this sermon, and that exhortation, and that prayer, and that fast had resulted thus and thus. And perhaps ever and anon there is a little puff in the newspaper, and a self-complacent sending out and trumpeting of our own fame, that the world and the church may hear. The Spirit of God is grieved; He turns away His face; He withholds His hand. Young converts stumble, sinners return to stupidity, the church return every one to his own way, and desolation drives its plough-share over the fair heritage of God.

10. Many persons apparently good have so rejoiced in boastings, that God seems to have left them. This has been true of ministers oftentimes--of those who have labored as evangelists, awhile successfully--of many laymen who have once known what it was to prevail with God. They have rejoiced in their boastings until God has forsaken them. He has thrown them aside, and there they lie and rot; and if they escape the depths of hell, it will be only by the persevering grace of God.

11. This subject ought to be a warning to all classes.

12. We are never right only as we lose sight of self, and rejoice only in the Lord, and glory only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Persons are never so nearly right as when they have the least apprehension of being right--as when they have the least thought of their own comeliness and virtue--when they are the most completely empty of all thoughts of their own goodness, and their minds are most entirely absorbed with the consideration of the goodness of God, and when all the powers of the mind are directed away from the contemplation of self, and most engrossed with the work of the Lord, the goodness and the infinite grace of God.

13. Persons who are really in a sanctified state, are not occupied with rejoicing in themselves. If they are really sanctified, it is impossible that they should be thus engaged in self-complacent rejoicing. For when sanctified, they are really emptied of all self-complacent rejoicings, and filled only with a sense of the adorable and sovereign grace of God. And with the utmost loathing and abhorrence of themselves, as for themselves they can say with all their hearts, "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." "By the grace of God alone, I am what I am."

The Church Bound to Convert the World- No.'s 1 & 2

Lectures VI & VII

April 9, 1845

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Text.--Matt. 28:18-20: "And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

LECTURE VI.

In discussing this subject I shall endeavor to show;

I. What the command to teach all nations, means.

II. On whom it is obligatory.

III. What is implied in it.

IV. Conditions of obedience.

V. The causes of failure.

VI. The great guilt of failure.

I. What does the command, "Go and teach all nations," mean?

In the margin of your Bibles, you will read, go and disciple or make disciples of all nations. This is undoubtedly the real meaning of the original. The word teach in the nineteenth verse, is not the same word which is rendered teach in the twentieth verse. The true meaning of the command is, go and make disciples or Christians of all nations.

II. On whom is this command obligatory?

It was addressed by Christ to those of His disciples who were then present, but doubtless was intended for all Christians, for it is not at all likely that Christ expected the disciples then present to do all this work. He doubtless meant to devolve the responsibility upon all Christians, to rest upon their consciences in all coming time until the work should be done.

III. The third inquiry is, What is implied in this command?

- 1. The command itself implies ability to obey it. Every command of God implies this in the strongest manner. It should be remembered that God is perfect in both love and wisdom: therefore He cannot be so unjust as to demand of us an impossibility, nor so ignorant as not to know the real limits of our powers.
- 2. But again let it be observed that Christ assumes our ability to obey this command on the ground that He has all power in heaven and in earth and has promised to be with the church in this work. In the eighteenth verse He says, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth."

The command follows; "Go ye, therefore, that is for this reason, because I have all power in heaven and in earth, go and make Christians of all nations; and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." We see then that Christ assumes our ability on the ground that He has all power in heaven and earth, and promises to be with us always even unto the end of the world; pledging His divine agency to work within us to will and to do, and without us to open the way providentially for our labor, and withal, to work by His Spirit in those to whom we publish the gospel. Thus Christ exerts His divine power in heaven and on earth so far as it is needed in accomplishing this great work.

- 3. The command implies that the great work of the church militant is, to make disciples of all nations; in other words, to convert the world to God.
- 4. It implies that this is their only work, that the only business they have on the earth is to glorify God in the world's conversion. They are to do or say nothing, and be nothing, more or less than is conducive to this end. To this their whole being, time, influence, and possessions are to be consecrated. In that solemn parting hour, Christ doubtless meant to give them His whole mind in these few last words; Go, apply yourselves directly to the conversion of the world, and finish the great work which I have begun. I have given you the example; let your eye too be single, and your devotion unwearied and entire.

IV. I am in the next place to consider the conditions of obedience to this command.

- 1. The first condition which I mention is, hearty and entire consecration to this work. The church will never accomplish it, until they go forth in the true spirit of the requirement, being devoted with a single eye to this work as Christ was. By this it is not intended that every Christian should be a preacher of the gospel, for there are a great many kinds of work to be done. Preaching is but a small part of the labor. Printing, and writing, the mechanic arts, agriculture, commerce, merchandise, and in short all the useful employments of this world are to be employed by the church as parts of this great work. But they are all to be pursued with the same end, that is, to convert the world.

Again, not only must ministers be consecrated to this work, but lay-men and women also. Whatever the immediate occupation of each individual is, let him pursue it with the same singleness of eye, and entire consecration to the great end of the world's conversion that ministers are bound to have in preaching the gospel. Everybody understands that ministers ought to preach for the glory of God, and ought to consecrate themselves to the work of the world's conversion, that this is their great business, and that they really apostatize in heart from their work whenever they fail of giving themselves up heart and soul to it. Now this is true of ministers; and it is equally true of all Christians. That Christian who tills his ground, or stands behind his counter, or writes, or prints, or does anything else, is bound to be as entirely consecrated to the glory of God and the world's conversion, as the minister ought to be, and unless he is he can never be saved. Lay-men and women judge right in respect to what is required of ministers in this matter, but they should understand that precisely the same is required of them. Until this is recognized by the church at large, and until the followers of Christ in every sect consecrate themselves to this work, with as single an eye as that which ministers are bound to have, the work

can never be performed.

- 2. Another condition is, union of effort. By united effort I mean the opposite of sectarian effort. By union among Christians I do not mean that they must all be in all respect of one opinion, but that they should be one in heart, and in respect to doctrinal opinions be agreed in all the fundamental points, also be agreed in tolerating each other, and allowing each other the most perfect liberty of opinion in respect to all points not fundamental. They must agree to differ on minor points without controversy or jangling. They must love each other so intensely and labor for the world's conversion so sincerely as not at all to stick on any of the minor points of Christian doctrine. If the church waits till all her members think alike on minor points, the world will never be converted; or if she expects to convert the world while cut up into sects and jangling parties, she is entirely deceived. A sectarian church can never convert the world to God, any more than so many Bramins could. If they convert them to their respective parties, this is by no means converting them to God; it only makes them sectarians. I am humbly of opinion, that until union prevails in the church in the sense above described, the world can never be converted. But more of this in another place.
- 3. Another condition of obedience to this command is, the realization of individual responsibility. The fact is that there is a strange shrinking away in this matter. Christians do not seem to realize that every man and woman of them is pledged on the solemnity of an oath to do his and her utmost to convert the world to God. In making a profession of religion they pledge implicit obedience to Christ. Now this is His last, and I may say, His great command. This is, as it were, a summary of all His requirements. It is the condensation of the whole of gospel duty, to convert the world. Now to the accomplishment of this end, every Christian of every age stands pledged. His whole being, influence, time, property, talents, resources, everything he has or is or can control, are pledged to this work on the solemnity of an oath. Nothing less than this is implied in pledging obedience to Christ and in making a public profession of religion. Now how is it that so few professors of religion have this idea standing out in strong development before them as the great idea which they are to aim constantly at realizing? Until this comes to be the omnipresent idea of the church, the great thing at which not only the whole but every individual aims, and which all endeavor constantly to accomplish, the world will never be converted. Every Christian man, woman, and child, must address himself and herself decidedly and exclusively to this work, or it will not be done.
- 4. The church must not expect to effect this wholly, or even principally through the instrumentality of a learned ministry. It is perfectly absurd for the church to expect ever to send forth a sufficient number of men, learned in the common acceptation of the term, to convert the world. Some learned men are indispensable to the accomplishment of this work. We need learned men to translate the Bible, to write books, and critical commentaries, to bring forth everything that belongs to the literature and philology of the Bible. These men have their places and their use, and are very important, and indeed indispensable to the accomplishment of this work. Yet really but little more than this can be expected of that part of the ministry which is devoted to the literature of the Bible. They have not time nor are they the men to go right forth and reap the harvest. They are as it were engaged in manufacturing the tools and preparing them for the work. They are stationed here and there to do a multitude of things which the less learned cannot do. But it should not be for a moment supposed that colleges and theological

seminaries are going to provide men enough for the world's conversion. The fact is that lay-men and women must come up to this work and make personal and direct effort, and really preach the gospel; or to use a less objectionable phrase, they must in every way suited to their circumstance, tell the story of the cross, and press the truth upon the consideration of men. The colleges and theological institutions have their places, and in their place they are very important. They are designed to furnish the indispensable number of learned men for the accomplishment of this work. But these men of learning after all, if the world is converted, will be found only as one to a thousand or ten thousand of the laborers that are to be employed in this field.

- 5. Nor need the church expect to accomplish this work wholly or perhaps even mainly through the instrumentality of any ministry whatever either learned or unlearned. There are no doubt hundreds and thousands of men who are not learned in the common acceptance of the term who are men of sound minds, ardent piety, good judgment, great discretion, who may be safely put into the ministry, who ought to be put in and who must be put in before this world can be converted. But even these will not be enough. The colporteur system needs to be extended a hundred or a thousand fold. Indeed laborers should be sent forth and shed over the world like the leaves of autumn until the church, men and women, go everywhere, as in the early ages, proclaiming the word of life. Everyone who has read the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles attentively knows that the Apostles all labored for a considerable number of years in and about Jerusalem, while the lay-men and women went every where preaching the gospel. There had to be a great struggle at Jerusalem to prevent the light being put out altogether in Judea. The whole influence of the Apostles was needed there for several years. But when the persecution arose about Stephen, the infant church, except the Apostles, were scattered abroad. These under God were the means of diffusing the knowledge of Christ and the savor of His name in all directions.
- 6. Another condition of obedience to this command is, the exhibition of brotherly love and Christian confidence. Christ in His last prayer made this the condition of the world's conversion, and it manifestly is so. "Neither pray I," says He, "for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word, that they may all be one as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Where Christians manifest no mutual attachment and little mutual confidence, all their theorizing will only pass among mankind for mere theory. The gospel in their hands will never get hold of the mass of men until the world are compelled to say, "See how these brethren love one another." Christians will neither have nor deserve the confidence of the world till they both have and deserve the confidence of each other. If they will not confide in one another who shall confide in them? This question is natural and inevitable, so that I regard it as an indispensable condition of the world's conversion, that the church manifest every where intense brotherly love and perfect Christian confidence. This is so in every community. You will find the wicked everywhere impressed with a sense of the importance of the gospel in proportion to the union, affection, and confidence of Christians among themselves. If professors of religion manifest but little attachment to each other, but little confidence in each other, the great mass of the unconverted are little or not at all impressed with the importance of religion; but if Christians are united, love each other with pure love, fervently, and show that they have the greatest confidence in each other, this impression arouses the world, and they begin

immediately to inquire, What shall I do to be saved?

- 7. Another condition of success in this work and obedience to the spirit of this requirement is, confidence in the presence, power, and readiness of Christ to go right forward with the church to the accomplishment of this work. The Apostles and early Christians seemed to realize that Christ was in earnest in saying, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth; Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, and lo, I am with you even to the end of the world." They seemed to understand that Christ was really in earnest in this matter, and that He really was ready, able, and willing, and that His whole heart was set upon the work, and that He was indeed with them, giving efficiency to what they did. When they were persecuted and commanded not to preach or to teach in the name of Christ, hear what they say; "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them. Who, by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed both Herod, and Pontius Pilate with the gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." Here is a specimen of the manner in which they regarded and treated opposition, and of their faith in Christ in respect to the performance of this great work. How could they fail of success?
- 8. Another condition of success is the practice of all needed self-denial. This is requisite in order to furnish the means and the devoted men and women to go forth to every nook and corner of the world where human beings are, and proclaim to them the gospel of salvation. We want men who are willing to take their lives in their hands, who have health and strength and heart to the work, and who can labor as some of our missionaries are laboring among the Indians, and as some of the African missionaries do, and as some others do in various parts of the world. We need hundreds and thousands of these men, men like minded, or rather men possessing a hundred fold more if possible of faith, patience and power than these already in the field. I would not find fault in general with the men that are engaged in this work, nor say any thing that should imply a want of consecration in them, but they are laboring almost single handed, greatly straitened for want of means, and their calls for help are unutterably agonizing. What do they tell us they could do under God in converting the world if they had the men and the means? But recently I saw an account of an address delivered by a British missionary from India, in which he affirmed that the obstacles throughout India to the spread of the Gospel were fewer than they were in England, that if twenty thousand missionaries could at once be set down in India they might go everywhere preaching the gospel to large and attentive congregations, in which not a man could be found that had ever heard the gospel before; that

the land is all open, the fields are white and waving for the harvest, and nothing needed but men and means, and faith in Christ to fire the train and spring the mind, and as it were blow up the very kingdom of the devil. O what a call is this! O what a door is here opened for the church to enter and achieve the world's conversion!

- 9. Another condition is patience in the performance of this work. No man ever accomplishes anything in the kingdom of God only as he suffers patience to have its perfect work. It is predicted of Christ that He should neither fail nor be discouraged till He had set judgment in the earth. Whoever gets out of patience and begins to scold and find fault, or become discouraged, will immediately grieve the Spirit of God and altogether defeat his own success. Many revivals have been prevented in this way. The laborers have not sufficient patience. They suffered themselves to get out of patience and to fret, perhaps to scold, complain, and find fault because things did not go as they would have them. This grieved the Spirit, and if there was a revival it was a revival of fault-finding and not of love.
- 10. Another condition is perseverance. They must learn to hold on and be of good courage till God strengthens their hands and their hearts in the work. Let me recommend to you Moffatt's account of the labors of the missionaries in Africa. That is certainly an admirable book, and the patience of Moffatt and his associates is worthy of all imitation. I don't know when I have been so instructed, so affected, and so rebuked as by reading that book. The admirable patience and perseverance of the missionaries is worthy of the churches' most attentive consideration. Often times on reading it I was ready to wonder that they did not abandon the field and conclude that God had not called them to that work. But no, they persevered against discouragements and embarrassments that would have overcome any but men filled with the Spirit which they had, and consecrated as they were to the great work of saving souls. May God bless them forever and prosper them until all Africa shall know the blessed gospel, and Ethiopia stretch forth her hands to God.
- 11. There must be constant and prevailing prayer. Did God promise to enlarge His church and convert the world? He has annexed this condition; "Nevertheless for this will I yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." There must be constant prayer. It must be the prayer of faith, of sympathy with God. It must be the effectual, fervent prayer--that wrestling agonizing travail of soul that has power with God. This must extend through the church. It must be universally diffused abroad, and prayer for the world's conversion instead of being confined almost entirely to the monthly concert, must be the labor and burden of every day. The church must take the world on her hands and upon her heart. The minister and the laymen and women, all classes and ages of Christians must really travail in birth for the world's conversion. It must absorb their whole attention; it must engross their thoughts, rouse up and set on fire their feelings, and pour itself out before God in a flood of agony before the world can be converted. Such prayer as is not commonly heard must be offered before this work can be done. We must have praying men and women, nay, the whole church must become a praying church, and be gathered around the mercy seat and lie on her face, and pour out her prayers with strong cryings and tears. This must be persevered in until they have come up to the full spirit and meaning of what God says, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest until He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." They must besiege the throne of grace with the

promises in their hand. There must be a great lifting up of heart and soul and a thousand times ten thousand hearts must echo and echo, "Thy kingdom come, Thy kingdom come," until this comes to be the universal cry of the church, until the heart of the church militant heaves like a volcano, and the gospel is like a burning fire shut up in her bones, and the promises are to them stable as the everlasting mountains; until she can plant her feet on them and stand and never retreat a hand's-breadth till the work is done.

LECTURE VII.

April 23, 1845

THE CHURCH BOUND TO CONVERT THE WORLD--No. 2

Text.--Matt. 28:18-20: "And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

V. I am to show the causes of failure hitherto.

- 1. It is not for want of numbers. The church has always had numbers enough to have accomplished this work, if she had had a heart for it.
- 2. It is not for want of means. She has always possessed all needed means for its accomplishment.
- 3. It is not for want of a sufficient number of educated men to carry this work forward. The church has always possessed education enough, and the means of education sufficient to have accomplished this work.
- 4. It is not because God has not been ready.
- 5. Nor again is it for want of time, nor for the want of resources of any kind. All these things have always been at the church's disposal. But,
 - (1.) A want of faith has been the fundamental difficulty, a want of real confidence in the truth that Christ possesses all power, and is always present, ready and willing to grant all needed aid for success.
 - (2.) A want of entire consecration to this work. The few individuals living in different ages, who have been manifestly consecrated to this work, have really accomplished much. I have recently been reading an account of the spread and success of the gospel in every century since the commencement of the Christian era, and it is greatly edifying to see what individual effort has done--to see how much individuals who have really been consecrated to this work have effected. The fact is that wherever a man or a woman has

had faith, and the spirit of consecration to this work, they have effected much. And it is very plain from what they have effected, that nothing is needed but the general consecration of the professed church of God to this work to have accomplished it centuries ago.

- o (3.) Sectarianism has been one cause of failure, perhaps the chief. Sectarian ambition, jealousy, collision--these and innumerable other evils have clustered around this growing abomination. Nine tenths, and perhaps I might say ninety-nine hundredths, of both ministerial and lay effort has lost its power by reason of a sectarian spirit. Go where you please over this great west and over the east too, and what do you see? Why! in a small village with a population perhaps just enough to make one respectable congregation, you find half a dozen or more feeble churches, of diverse sects with as many half-starved, and deservedly half-starved ministers, keeping up their sectarian bars, and perhaps undesignedly keeping alive the very prejudice that prevents the success of the gospel. One man comes on to the ground to attend to the Presbyterian or Congregational interests in that place and region. Another must be thrust in to attend to the Close Baptist interests and another to attend to the Free-will Baptists interests. Next there must be two or three Methodist ministers to attend to the Episcopal interests and the Wesleyan Methodist interests, and the low church Episcopal interests; next, but no least, the New School interest, and the Old School interest, and among them all, they seem very generally to attend pretty thoroughly to the devil's interests. I mean that by this arrangement the devil's interest is really in the best way secured; not that they really intended any such thing; God forbid that I should make any such insinuation. They really mean, (as they profess) to secure the interests of their respective denominations. But in this way they most effectually hinder the success of the kingdom of Christ. In this way just those jealousies are kept up which grieve the Spirit, alienate the hearts of Christians from each other, weaken the hands of the ministers, disgust the impenitent, and please the devil. Now I have not the least doubt that in the great majority of cases, if not in nine cases out of ten, if all the ministers but one, in such villages should leave the ground, and let him belong to one of the evangelical denominations, I care not which, he could do more, perhaps ten times more than they can all do together. If they would all go off to the heathen, or to destitute regions in our own country, and spread themselves out, and never again think of their denominational interests, we should never again hear such things as going out to nurse the interests of this sect and that sect. They would give themselves directly to the work of converting the world to God, and almost infinitely more could be done than is done now.

This subject used to be the burden and agony of my soul before I came to this place. When I first came here I was resolved on using whatever influence I had to secure the adoption of a creed that should comprehend only the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, and also to secure a most perfect toleration of opinion on all minor points, so that all true Christians could unite. Then, if ever sectarians crept in, they should not do it under the pretense that their members were excluded from our communion. They should take the entire responsibility of introducing into this community that abomination from the pit, a sectarian spirit. Here we are thus far one

congregation, and see what a crown I have around me; but what should we do if we were divided into a half dozen congregations, with as many ministers to stickle for their sectarian peculiarities? It would be the curse and the ruin of the place, of the Institution, and of the cause of Christ in our midst. I wish to make a strong impression on this subject, and I would that I could succeed in making the church feel that sectarianism is doing more to prevent the world's conversion a thousand fold, than all the Infidelity and Universalism and Romanism, and every other ism that curses the world together. I fear this is not duly considered. Let any one man create among a people sectarian jealousies and prejudices, and he can never promote true and undefiled religion there. There is much delusion on this subject. Many who do nothing but promote sectarian interests seem to be fondly dreaming that they are promoting the cause of Christ. They think they are making real Christians, and converting men to God, but they are deceiving themselves. If they are creating sectarian prejudice, if they are merely fostering denominational interests, they may be compassing sea and land, and making many proselytes, but they are making them two-fold more the children of hell than themselves.

The fact is that the spirit of sectarianism instantly cools individual piety; it curses churches; it ruins communities; it swallows up a great part of the ministerial influence of the church. In most of the villages throughout the land, where they should all unite in one congregation, and where if they would, they are abundantly able to support the ministry and do much for the spread of the gospel abroad, being cut up as they are into little churches, they must build each of them a house, a little house, that will hold two or three or four hundred people, and get a minister, and measure out to him his sal and his potatoes, and he must preach on the Sabbath to some fifty or a hundred souls, and spend his week time chiefly either on a farm, or in some other lucrative employment to keep his family in bread. Now what do my brethren think themselves engaged in? Is this the way for ministers to be used up? What! when twenty thousand ministers are at once demanded in India, and hundreds of thousands in other parts of the world? Why, men and brethren, we might better than not spare eight tenths of all the ministers in the land, if they would clear out, and but one stay in a place. I have long thought that I never would consent to settle down and give myself up to preach the gospel under such circumstances as I have named. I would never occupy a position where there were a number of ministers, and the work might as well and better be done by one. I do not believe that God can ever bless any such thing as this, and I am agonized and pained to my very heart to see this the general state of the church over the whole land. I have known that many of my brethren have felt with me, distressed on this subject. The remedy is at hand. Let the true spirit of the world's conversion only take possession of the entire ministry, and the days of sectarianism are numbered and finished. Then the present ministry may be spread over a field five or ten times as

great as that which they now occupy, and even then much more fully meet the real wants of the people than they now do.

- o (4.) Another cause of failure has been that the church to a great extent has lost sight of the true spirit of what Christ says in the text. As I was presenting this thought not long since, to wit, that the church was commanded to convert the world, and through the strength and grace of Christ had power to do so, a brother remarked to me, Why this is new! This is entirely a new view of the subject. The church has not understood this. Now I would ask, To whom is it new? The brother to whom I replied did not mean that it was not the true meaning of the text, but that he and the church had not so considered it. I am afraid that it is new to hundreds and thousands of the professed followers of Christ. It would appear indeed that it has been lost sight of in a great measure. If I mistake not, Christians do not generally understand that the text requires them to make disciples of the sinners around them. But certainly this is its true meaning.

I fear many parents do not understand themselves to be required, even to convert their own children, and that churches do not generally understand themselves as being responsible for the conversion of the impenitent in their midst. But yet this is no doubt the truth of revelation. Who can deny that this is the true spirit and meaning of what Christ says in the text? If he commanded the church to make disciples or Christians of all nations, on the ground that He possesses all power in heaven and in earth, and will be with and aid them in this work, is it not our duty to convert those immediately around us? to make disciples of those in our own houses? who can deny it?

- o (5.) But not only has the command been lost sight of, but the annexed promise also, "Lo I am with you." The true spirit and meaning of what Christ here says seems not to be generally recognized and felt. Neither ministers nor lay-men seem to take hold upon and anchor down upon what Christ really here intended. It is as if He had said, "I possess almighty power; Go forth, therefore, and convert all nations; and I will be with you and give you success." It is true, therefore, that whenever we go forth to this work we should expect to accomplish it. We are to rest assured that Christ is with us, and that in His strength the work can be, will be, and must be done.
- 6. Another thing that has greatly hindered the work has been that too much has been expected from human learning, and not enough by any means from Christ or from the Holy Spirit. Human learning has its place, and its importance, but learned men are altogether too apt to place too much reliance on their learning, and to little on the Holy Ghost. This also is a great error. They are looking for a man of talents, a man of eloquence in the church, a man of learning, instead of a deeply spiritual, praying man. The choice that the churches make of men to preach the gospel, proves to a demonstration that they really place more reliance on human eloquence and learning than they do on deep spirituality, and the power of the Holy Ghost. Where have you known a church in fact lay the principal stress on the faith, the piety, and deep spirituality of the man of their choice? No; the first thing sought is talents; the second, piety, last of all, deep spirituality and great faith and power in prayer. Now they have directly reversed the true order. Until they practically lay the principal stress on the deep piety, faith and spirituality

of the man whom they choose as pastor, they may expect curses from God rather than blessings. The fact is, God will not give His glory to another; and where this stress is laid on human learning, and the idea of spiritual influence is thrown so much into the background, God cannot secure to Himself the glory, and therefore He will not work.

- 7. The work has been greatly retarded by a want of deep sympathy with Christ. The church as not loved a ruined world as Christ loved it, and as the Father loved it. Why, when parents will love their children as Christ loved them, they will make such sacrifices for their salvation as Christ made; nay, when they will but begin to approach this, they may expect their children to be soon converted. When the church really enters into sympathy with Christ, and so loves the world as to be willing to give themselves for its salvation, to live and to die for this purpose; when this spirit becomes common, and the church will go forth as Christ went, and live and labor as Christ lived and labored, and lay down their lives on the battle-field as Christ laid down His, then the work will be soon accomplished. I verily believe it might as well be converted in fifty years as in five hundred or five thousand.
- 8. But again, the church as been discouraged. She has had so little faith that her efforts by way of missionary labor have accomplished comparatively little. Her success has no doubt equaled her faith, and perhaps surpassed it, but still she has been so unbelieving that comparatively little has been accomplished. Little can be accomplished until she will believe the promises of God.
- 9. Conformity to the world in almost every respect has been another great, and I may say, growing impediment to the world's conversion. This subject branches out in so many directions, I can but just name it.
- 10. Another hindrance has been that the attention and efforts of the church are directed to mere outward reforms. At this I have often been unutterably pained. Instead of doing as the apostles did, directly addressing ourselves to the hearts and consciences of men; instead of beginning within to reform, the church has been to a great extent satisfying herself with a mere outward reform.
- 11. Worldly ambition in young men who are professors of religion has stood greatly in the way of the world's conversion. They are in such a state that they have come to look on the ministry as rather a driveling business, and not recognizing themselves as pledged to convert the world, as soon as possible, they turn aside into other professions, and to other business, and leave the world and the cause of Christ to take care of themselves.
- 12. Another difficulty in the way has been clerical ambition. The whole history of the church shows this. In almost every age of the Christian church there has been a grasping after power, even among the ministers of Christ. They have become jealous of lay influence and have taken everything into their own hands. It would seem that they would fain do the work alone, but they never can. That is the best and most successful minister, who knows best how to bring the greatest amount of lay effort to bear on the world, and who actually accomplished this. Ministers can do but a very small part of this work, and if they suffer themselves to become jealous of lay influence, and keep the lay-men and women still, and undertake to feed them and

promote their piety without requiring them to consecrate their personal service to the work, they will surely find themselves greatly mistaken. It cannot be. It is contrary to the true nature of religion.

Every man and woman must have some spiritual labor constantly on their hands, or they cannot grow in grace. The great thing, it seems to me, which ministers ought to do is principally to plan labors for the lay men; to feed them with the sincere milk of the word; to give them spiritual food enough, and then press them up to perform the work.

I might mention a great many other causes of failure hitherto in this great work, but must not protract remarks under this head.

VI. I must proceed to the sixth and last head of this discourse, to wit, to consider in few words the guilt of this failure.

- 1. The truth we here insist on is this; that the blood of the world is in the skirts of the church. God informed the prophet that if he did not warn and do his duty to the wicked, the wicked should die in his sins, but his blood would He require at his hand. Now under the Christian dispensation the whole church are placed in the same position with the prophet in this respect. It was the prophet and the priest on whom principally the duty of warning the guilty devolved. But Christ has commissioned and commanded the whole church to do this. He has required her to teach and disciple all nations. This principle applied formerly to the prophet, must now be applicable to the whole church.
- 2. The great law of benevolence requires the church to do all in her power for the conversion of the world, and holds her guilty of the world's blood if she suffers it to be lost. Christ said of the church, "Ye are the light of the world. Ye are the salt of the earth." If therefore the world is not enlightened, it is the fault of the church. If it is not preserved from moral putrefaction, it is the fault of the church. If the name of Jesus is not familiar to every human being in every language and in every clime, it is the fault of the church. The church have had the time enough, have possessed all the requisite means, have had the promise of Him who has "all power in heaven and in earth," to be with them, and give them all necessary aid. Where then is the blood of the world but in the skirts of the church?

I must close what I have to say with a few

REMARKS.

1. This guilt attaches to every Christian to whom the command in the text has come, and who is not entirely consecrated to the work of saving souls. It is high time that every Christian should understand his duty in this matter, and the greatness of his responsibility. He should daily consider to what he stands pledged, and the guilt he will incur if he suffers himself to be diverted from the great work for the accomplishment of which he is permitted to live in the world.

2. When God makes inquisition for blood, what will become of those professors of religion who have turned aside from this work and are attending to something else? I have said that the ambition of

young men and I might add, of many young men who ought to prepare for the ministry, has turned them aside into law-offices and land-offices, and merchandise, and all manner of worldly employments, because these courses of life open to them prospects of obtaining greater wealth or worldly influence. To say the least, they have manifestly not taken the position in which they might most successfully and directly prosecute the great work of the world's conversion.

Now, young man, when God shall make inquisition for the blood of souls, He will say to you, Where is thy brother? The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto Me from the ground. Where art thou? What hast thou done? Wherefore hast thou not given thyself wholly and directly to the work of the world's conversion? "Take this unprofitable servant; bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The same may and must be said of all Christians who have turned aside from this great work of their own interests, and left the world in its blood to sink down to hell.

From this subject we can easily see how great a mistake was made by the church soon after the death of the Apostles. Various causes soon came into operation that developed an ascetic idea of religion. This immediately diverted the church from the great end of the world's conversion to seek after what they imagined to be a higher state of spirituality. Soon after the Apostle's days, as we learn from history, and indeed to some extent while some of the Apostles were yet living, the idea had gained considerable currency that the world was coming to an end; that Christ's second advent was at hand; and that He was coming to judge the world. This idea doubtless had great influence in bringing about the state of things which I am just about to mention. They seem to have given up the idea of the world's conversion and supposed mankind to be, at least chiefly, devoted to destruction. Great multitudes retreated from the world and betook themselves to what they supposed to be a strictly religious life, practicing celibacy and various austerities, mortifications, and self-denials. They shut themselves out from society and lived in seclusion, seeming to suppose that to live in the world and associate with men as Christ and His apostles had done, was not consistent with the highest degrees of spirituality. They therefore betook themselves to an entirely different course of life, lost altogether the true idea of religion, and attempted to be spiritual without a particle of benevolence, or, in other words, without religion. They sought a spirituality that was anything but true Christianity. Instead of pressing the world's conversion with ardor, they began to build nunneries and monasteries and to establish institutions for the very purpose of secluding the spiritual ones from intercourse with the world. They shut themselves up in those places of spurious spirituality. Every reader of church history must be acquainted with the deplorable and fundamental mistake into what a great part of the church thus fell. Here, to a great extent, the efforts for the world's conversion ceased. Here a dark cloud shut down over the prospects of dying humanity.

3. From what has been said it is easy to see the mistake into which our Second Advent brethren of the present day have fallen. Many of them have given up altogether not only the idea of the world's conversion, and consequently all efforts to save the world, but have given up, and so far as their influence extends are endeavoring to persuade others to give up the idea and expectation of anymore sinners being converted at all. Now I would ask, by what authority do they shrink from carrying out the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, contained in the text? Suppose it were true that Christ is to come at any given time this year, or next year, is not the command in the text binding until He does come? And is not the annexed promise that He will be with us in this work good until the end? Has

He said, "Go and make disciples of all nations until such a time and then cease?" I trow (think) not. Now whether it be true or false that Christ is soon to come, it is a wretched mistake for them to give up efforts for the conversion of sinners.

4. Does not the command with the subjoined promise in the text authorize and require the church to go forth to the conversion of the world, with the expectation that the world will be converted? Suppose the church should now arise and address herself to this work and lay hold of the promise of Christ; can it be supposed that Christ would say, "O you are too late now. I shall not wait for you now to convert the world. I shall not go with you now. I said I would be with you to the end of the world, but I shall be with you no longer. You need not go forth to this work; it is now altogether too late." Who believes that Christ would take back His promise and fail to go forth with His church to the conversion of the world?

5. From this subject we can see the mistake of those Antinomians who are waiting God's time, and who are saying "The time has not come to build the house of the Lord;" and are accusing us of going to work in our own strength if we attempt to promote revivals, and of trying to take the work out of the hands of God, of interfering with His sovereignty, of compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, &c. Why, what do they mean! waiting God's time! I have heard some of them talk in this way. They would insist that they must have an inward impulse or revelation to go forth to this work. They must wait to be sent of God. They don't believe in going out to convert sinners unless they are sent of God. Now what an infinite mistake is here! Has not Christ commanded the whole church to go; and now, shall she say she must wait for a revelation from God before she can go? Must she overlook the true letter and spirit of this command and promise, and wait for some other revelation? Indeed, there are certain individuals who it seems would fain persuade the church not to go until she is sent by the Spirit, not to move until God moves, and are telling those who would do something for the conversion of sinners that God has not required this at their hand, that they must remain quiet and rest until God moves them to this work. Now here is certainly a great error, a great and ruinous error. If God has required us in His written word to do anything, are we to wait for any other revelation? If God commands sinners to repent, are they to wait for some other revelation of His will? If He requires Christians to go right forth and convert the world are they to wait eighteen hundred years and then continue to sing the lullaby, "wait God's time, don't run before you are sent"?

6. These notions of the Adventists and Antinomians are doing very much to retard the great work of converting souls to God. The Adventists seem not only wholly to have lost their confidence and interest in this work, but they have really shaken the confidence of a great number who are not Adventists, so far at least as greatly to have abated their zeal. I find it has come to be very extensively doubted whether the nations are really to be converted to God, or can be. The Adventists, many of them, have boldly proclaimed that it cannot be; that the nations must be destroyed and cannot be made the disciples of Christ; that to Christianize the world is out of the question; that the world is too wicked to be Christianized. They seem to have taken up a view of the Christian religion which is the exact opposite of our Savior's representation. They boldly proclaim--I have heard them proclaim, that the tendency of things in this world is to run out the Christian religion everywhere; to extinguish its light, and drive it from the world. But Christ's representation is exactly the reverse of this. He says, The kingdom of heaven, meaning by this true religion, is like a little leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened; that it is like a mustard seed, which is the

least of all seeds, but when sown in the earth springs up and becomes a great tree. Daniel said it was like a stone cut out of the mountain, which rolled and grew as it proceeded until it became a great mountain and filled the earth. Now there are a vast many passages of scripture that thus speak of the kingdom of God, or of true religion in the world. These representations are exactly opposite to the representations of our Advent brethren. The only kingdom of God according to them, which can ever stand and prosper in this world, is a kingdom set up all at once, filling the whole earth by the destruction of the wicked. Is this like leaven? a little leaven hid in three measures of meal till the whole is leavened?

But to return to the point which I stated in the beginning of this paragraph, viz., that these brethren had done much to dishearten the church, to shake their confidence, to create doubts in many pious minds on this subject, and thus to weaken the energies of the church when she has just begun to awake to the importance of this great enterprise. In whose skirts shall the blood of thousands that will perish in consequence of it be found? With my present views, nothing could persuade me to put a damper on the rising hopes of the church in this direction.

7. I am fully persuaded that nothing but the absence of love, or in other words, of true religion, is the occasion of the sectarianism that is dividing and cursing the church. Nothing is wanting but for the church to be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of brotherly love, and of sympathy with Christ in respect to the world's conversion, to unite her energies, and concentrate them on this great work. It is really amazing and agonizing that mere differences of opinion on points of minor importance, (as all are agreed,) should rend the church into parties, destroy her unity, and not only jeopardize, but awfully hasten and aggravate the ruin of the world.

The more I see of the working of things in the midst of us in this place, the more I am satisfied of the great error of division in the church in consequence of differences of opinion on points of doctrine not fundamental. Our Confession of Faith and Covenant were designed to embrace only those points of Christian doctrine that are supposed by us to be fundamental to the existence of the true church of God. We have by the blessing of God been enabled to live together now ten years as one church. Persons from nearly all the evangelical churches in the land have come and united with us. We have gone on without controversy and division hitherto, on the principle of the most affectionate toleration of theological opinions in respect to everything not fundamental. We have not yet found any difficulty in the prosecution of this work. There has been now and then a sectarian spirit here who has felt uneasy, and has made occasional efforts to introduce sectarianism, and put up sectarian bars in the midst of us. But the religious sentiment of the community has hitherto looked coldly on all such efforts, and the really pious among us, whatever their peculiar shades of opinion, have hitherto seemed to be united in frowning down all sectarian movements. Now why may not this be so in every village and every town in the land? I can see no reason why this should not be so.

8. If the ministers of all evangelical denominations would so thoroughly wake up to the world's conversion as to agree among themselves that two ministers should not occupy any field that could be supplied by one, and the Christians should not be encouraged to separate on account of doctrinal views where their differences are not fundamental, and if ministers should determine that they would no longer suffer themselves to be settled over little feeble churches where Christians are divided by sectarian prejudices; if they would resolve that no more than one minister of an evangelical

denomination should be spared to one field, and if they would insist on it that where a village or town is not too large for one congregation but one minister should be left to occupy that field, such a state of things as this, would be as life from the dead. It would be vastly better for every village and every town in Christendom that the ministers should take this stand, and if all the rest were in heaven, or in Hindoostan, or in any part of the universe, it would be better than for them to be huddled together, three or four ministers in reality supplying but one congregation or only souls enough to make one, and this too under such circumstances as must almost entirely exclude all true religion from the place. It does seem to me that ministers should resolve not to do this. When they find a town or a village occupied by a decidedly evangelical and pious minister where there are not people enough for more than one large and healthy congregation, they should refuse to settle under any circumstances to gratify the prejudices of a few sectarian spirits who wish to get up a church of another denomination. This is low business; it is anti-Christian. No; such sectarian spirits should rather be rebuked.

9. But again, I have often wondered how ministers could think themselves in the path of duty, in thus giving themselves up to minister to sectarian prejudices and to nurse the interests of a party--of one sect, instead of going forth in the spirit of true catholicism to pull souls out of the fire. There is no describing in words the folly and anti-Christian tendency of all such things as these. Just look at the church; see the ministers go from place to place, and where they find a few Presbyterians or a few Methodists or a few Baptists, they say, here are a few of our members; here we must plant a church. Here the interests of our sect must be nursed. They immediately set about gathering little churches, sticking up their stakes, putting up their sectarian bars and gathering around them all the paraphernalia of sectarianism. Now on comes a minister of another denomination and finds a few whose prejudices favor his sect, and he must gather a church, and then another minister does the same, and another, till you will see their little meeting-houses or other places of worship scattered here and there, with a few sectarian spirits gathered around a sectarian minister, all jealous of each other and making efforts as they say and as they suppose, to convert the world. Now what is the result? Why, one of these churches must have a protracted meeting. They must make an effort of a revival as the other congregations are perhaps gaining the advantage of them in point of numbers and influence. They must get the most eloquent preacher they can, and make an effort to build up their congregation, and establish their sect. The other churches look coldly on, and directly begin to feel, as if their church and congregation were in danger of being encroached upon, so they must begin a similar effort and have a protracted meeting. They must, if possible, get a more eloquent preacher than the other. They must bluster and pray and visit from house to house and appear to feel for souls; when it is greatly to be feared that the real spirit of their efforts and their prayers is, "Lord, build up our sect, make our congregation popular, add to our numbers so that we can more easily support our minister, and give us decidedly the most popular and wealthy congregation in the place, amen." By this time another and another of these little churches begins to move in the same direction and for the same reason. They thus act on each other till they all become inflamed with great zeal, and greatly provoke each other, not to love and good works, but to sectarianism and party efforts. The result of the whole may be, some real converts, a number of thorough sectarian additions to the different churches, but much disgrace in the estimation of a thinking but impenitent community. Now how infinitely better had it been for but one minister to have occupied this field, no matter of what peculiar evangelical denomination. How much better were it if ministers would give no countenance whatever to the division of Christians into different sects in a place where they might just as well all unite in one church and in one congregation. It is almost ruinous to the cause of Christ to make these divisions. It

is a stumbling-block to the church, a curse and an abomination the world, and when God makes inquisition for blood, then let sectarians be ready to answer. But it may be asked, what shall ministers do? If but one minister is to occupy a field on which reside only inhabitants enough for one congregation, a great many ministers will be thrown out of employment? I answer, all the better; they can be spared to go to the heathen, or to betake themselves to other necessary and useful employments. Why shall the church be obliged to support such a number of ministers where one can do the work better than all of them?

10. Christians stand greatly in their own light in dividing themselves into different churches where a truly catholic spirit would enable them all to dwell together and unite and labor harmoniously for building up the kingdom of Christ. Why will they load themselves with the burden of supporting two, three, or even a half dozen ministers in a town or village where the work might be more healthfully accomplished by one? Oh! Christians are not aware how much sectarianism there is often times in their own state of mind, and how infinitely foolish it is for them to be so sticklish for dogmas in opinions confessedly not fundamental as to alienate the hearts of brethren from one another, to stumble the world and grieve the heart of Christ.

11. Another great evil is the influence of sectarian newspapers. This evil is a rapidly growing one. Each sect must have its great organ. As the sect increases, multitudes of smaller ones are got up, the conduct and policy of which is anything but Christian. Generally they publish but one side on any question, and in multitudes of instances keep their readers entirely in the dark in respect to the real questions and facts about which they speak. There is scarcely anything that appears more shocking and monstrous to me, more anti-Christian and God-dishonoring than the course taken by sectarian newspapers. It is not only grievous but truly shocking to see how often they are filled with misrepresentations. Now what is the effect of this, but to blind and mislead the different sects, destroy their Christian confidence in each other, sunder their hearts and their efforts; what but to chill and freeze and even drive the spirit of vital piety from among them. I have often asked myself, how can it be that the editors of these newspapers do not see, and that ministers do not see that to create such prejudices, to beget such misapprehensions, and to foster such a spirit in their churches is really to ruin them, to exclude all their real piety, and substitute nothing but bitter and sectarian zeal in its stead. With my present views, I would sooner have my right hand cut off and my right eye plucked out--indeed it seems to me that I would sooner have my heart torn from my body, than to put forth my hand to such a work as this, ministering to prejudice, alienating the hearts of brethren from each other, rending the church of God, nursing a party spirit. Oh! this is a work of death! When God shall make inquisition for blood, I say again, let those engaged in this work prepare to meet their God. My heart is full of this subject but I cannot enlarge.

12. Another thing has done much to retard the great work of the world's conversion. I mean a turning aside of Christians from their proper work, and from the direct effort to convert and sanctify the world to God, to various other matters of very questionable truth and tendency. I have been astonished to find that so many ministers have from time to time given themselves up to lecturing on phrenology, mesmerism, and such like things; have gone around the country and into our cities and collected large audiences and given them a course of lectures on these subjects, with nothing more than now and then an indirect allusion to God and Christ, and the salvation of the soul. It does seem to me that this is gross apostasy from the great work of the world's conversion.

13. It hardly need be said, and it grieves me much to be obliged to say that Christians, and even many ministers have been altogether too much diverted, especially of late, by party politics. Indeed, nearly all the reforms of the day have taken on to an alarming extent the type of a mere outward and of course temporary reform. Multitudes of ministers have forsaken the direct work of converting the souls of men to God, and have gone into various agencies for the promotion of these mere outward reforms. I greatly fear that such efforts, pushed as they are at the present day, are after all making clean the outside of the cup and platter, while the "ravens and wickedness" within is left untouched.

Now, beloved, let us for a moment come right back to the question. What have we to do? What is the business to which we are to address ourselves? Here the command and promise of the text lie in all their force before us. We are to act as if Christ had just for the first time sounded this in our ears, and the church ought today to address herself to the work with as much zeal and earnestness and consecration as she would if Christ had for the first time this day stood on the earth and given out this great commission; 'All power is given Me in heaven and in earth; Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and Holy Ghost; and lo, I am with you even unto the end of the world.' Now let it be understood that no one who hears this command and does not obey in the true spirit and meaning of it, has a right to the name of a Christian, let him be who he may. If he does not consecrate himself to this work, if he does not hold on and persevere in doing what he can to accomplish it to the end of life, he has no sympathy with Christ, no regard for His requirements, and no title to eternal life.

Trusting in God's Mercy

Lecture VIII

May 7, 1845

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Text.--Ps. 52:8: "I will trust in the mercy of God forever and ever."

In discussing this subject I shall enquire,

I. What mercy is.

II. What is implied in trusting in the mercy of the Lord forever.

III. Point out the conditions on which we may safely trust in God's mercy.

IV. Allude to several mistakes which are made on this subject.

I. What mercy is.

- 1. Mercy as an attribute of God, is not to be confounded with mere goodness. This mistake is often made. That it is a mistake, you will see at once if you consider that mercy is directly opposed to justice, while yet justice is one of the natural and legitimate developments of goodness. Goodness may demand the exercise of justice; indeed it often does; but to say that mercy demands the exercise of justice, is to use the word without meaning. Mercy asks that justice be set aside. Of course mercy and goodness stand in very different relations to justice, and are very different attributes.
- 2. Mercy is a disposition to pardon the guilty. Its exercise consists in arresting and setting aside the penalty of law, when that penalty has been incurred by transgression. It is, as has been said, directly opposed to justice. Justice treats every individual according to his deserts; mercy treats the criminal very differently from what he deserves to be treated. Desert is never the rule by which mercy is guided; while it is precisely the rule of justice.
- 3. Mercy is exercised only where there is guilt. It always pre-supposes guilt. The penalty of the law must have been previously incurred, else there can be no scope for mercy.
- 4. Mercy can be exercised no farther than one deserves punishment. It may continue its exercise just as long as punishment is deserved, but no longer; just as far as ill desert goes, but no farther. If great punishment is deserved, great mercy can be shown; if endless punishment is due, there is then scope for infinite mercy to be shown, but not otherwise.

II. I am to show what is implied in trusting in the mercy of God.

- 1. A conviction of guilt. None can properly be said to trust in the mercy of God unless they have committed crimes, and are conscious of this fact. Justice protects the innocent, and they may safely appeal to it for defence or redress. But for the guilty nothing remains but to trust in mercy. Trusting in mercy always implies a deep, heartfelt conviction of personal guilt.
- 2. Trust in mercy always implies that we have no hope on the score of justice. If we had anything to expect from justice, we should not look to mercy. The human heart is too proud to throw itself upon mercy while it presumes itself to have a valid claim to favor on the score of justice. Nay more, to appeal to mercy when we might rightfully appeal to justice is never demanded either by God's law or gospel, nor can it be in harmony with our relations to Jehovah's government. In fact, the thing is in the very nature of the mind, impossible.
- 3. Trust in mercy implies a just apprehension of what mercy is. On this point many fail because they confound mercy with mere goodness, or with grace, considered as mere favor to the undeserving. The latter may be shown where there is no mercy, the term mercy being applied to the pardon of crime. We all know that God shows favor, or grace in the general sense, to all the wicked on earth. He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the unjust as well as on the just. But to trust in this general favor shown to the wicked while on trial

here is not trusting in the mercy of God. We never trust in mercy till we really understand what it is--pardon for the crimes of the guilty.

- 4. Trust in God's mercy implies a belief that he is merciful. We could not trust Him if we had no such belief. This belief must always lie at the foundation of real trust. Indeed so naturally does this belief beget that out-going of the soul and resting upon God which we call trust, that in the New Testament sense it commonly includes both. Faith, or belief, includes a hearty committal of the soul to God, and a cordial trust in him.
- 5. "Trusting in the mercy of God forever and ever" implies a conviction of deserving endless punishment. Mercy is co-extensive with desert of punishment, and can in its nature go no farther. It is rational to rely upon the exercise of mercy for as long time as we deserve punishment, but no longer. A prisoner under a three years' sentence to State's prison may ask for the exercise of mercy in the form of pardon for so long a time; but he will not ask a pardon for ten years when he needs it only for three, or ask a pardon after his three years' term has expired. This principle is perfectly obvious; where desert of punishment ceases, there mercy also ceases and our trust in it. While desert of punishment continues, so may mercy, and our trust in its exercise. When therefore the Psalmist trusts in the mercy of God forever, he renounces all hope of being ever received to favor on the score of justice.
- 6. Trusting in mercy implies a cessation from all excuses and excuse-making. The moment you trust in mercy, you give up all apologies and excuses at once and entirely; for these imply a reliance upon God's justice. An excuse or apology is nothing more nor less than an appeal to justice; a plea designed to justify our conduct. Trusting in mercy forever implies that we have ceased from all excuses forever.

Thus a man on trial before a civil court, so long as he pleads justifications and excuses, appeals to justice; but if he goes before the court and pleads guilty, offering no justification or apology whatever, he throws himself upon the clemency of the court. This is quite another thing from self-justification. It sometimes happens that in the same trial, the accused party tries both expedients. He first attempts his own defense; but finding this vain, he shifts his position, confesses his crime and ill desert, and throws himself upon the mercy of the court. Perhaps he begs the court to commend him to the mercy of the executive in whom is vested the pardoning power.

Now it is always understood that when a man pleads guilty he desists from making excuses, and appeals only to mercy. So in any private matter with my neighbor. If I justify myself fully, I surely have no confession to make. But if I am conscious of having done him wrong, I freely confess my wrong, and appeal to mercy. Self-justification stands right over against confession.

So in parental discipline. If your child sternly justifies himself, he makes no appeal to mercy. But the moment when he casts himself upon your bosom with tears, and says, I am all wrong, he ceases to make excuses, and trusts himself to mercy. So in the government of God. Trust in mercy is a final giving up of all reliance upon justice. You have no more excuses; you make none.

III. We must next consider the conditions upon which we may confidently and securely trust in the mercy of God forever.

- 1. Public justice must be appeased. Its demands must be satisfied. God is a great public magistrate, sustaining infinitely responsible relations to the moral universe. He must be careful what He does.

Perhaps no measure of government is more delicate and difficult in its bearings than the exercise of mercy. It is a most critical point. There is eminent danger of making the impression that mercy would trample down law. The very thing that mercy does is to set aside the execution of the penalty of law; the danger is lest this should seem to set aside the law itself. The great problem is, How can the law retain its full majesty, the execution of its penalty being entirely withdrawn? This is always a difficult and delicate matter.

In human governments we often see great firmness exercised by the magistrate. During the scenes of the American Revolution, Washington was earnestly importuned to pardon Andre. The latter was eminently an amiable, lovely man; and his case excited a deep sympathy in the American army. Numerous and urgent petitions were made to Washington in his behalf; but no, Washington could not yield. They besought him to see Andre, in hope that a personal interview might touch his heart; but he refused even to see him. He dared not trust his own feelings. He felt that this was a great crisis, and that a nation's welfare was in peril. Hence his stern unyielding decision. It was not that he lacked compassion of soul. He had a heart to feel. But under the circumstances, he knew too well that no scope must be given to the indulgence of his tender sympathies. He dared not gratify these feelings, lest a nation's ruin should be the penalty.

Such cases have often occurred in human governments, when every feeling of the soul is on the side of mercy and makes its strong demand for indulgence; but justice forbids.

Often in family government, the parent has an agonizing trial; he would sooner bear the pain himself thrice told than to inflict it upon his son; but interests of perhaps infinite moment are at stake, and must not be put in peril by the indulgence of his compassions.

Now if the exercise of mercy in such cases is difficult, how much more so in the government of God? Hence the first condition of the exercise of mercy is that something be done to meet the demands of public justice. It is absolutely indispensable that law be sustained. However much disposed God may be to pardon, yet he is too good to exercise mercy on any such conditions or under any such circumstances as will impair the dignity of his law, throw out a license to sin, and open the very flood-gates of iniquity. Jehovah never can do this. He knows he never ought to.

On this point it only need be said at present, that this difficulty is wholly removed by the atonement of Christ.

- 2. A second condition is that we repent. Certainly no sinner has the least ground to hope for mercy until he repents. Will God pardon the sinner while yet in his rebellion? Never. To do so

would be most unjust in God--most ruinous to the universe. It would be virtually proclaiming that sin is less than a trifle--that God cares not how set in wickedness the sinner's heart is; he is ready to take the most rebellious heart, unhumbled, to his own bosom. Before God can do this he must cease to be holy.

- 3. We must confess our sins. "He that confesseth," and he only, "shall find mercy." Jehovah sustains such relations to the moral universe that he cannot forgive without the sinner's confession. He must have the sinner's testimony against himself and in favor of law and obedience.

Suppose a man convicted and sentenced to be hung. He petitions the governor for pardon, but is too proud to confess, at least in public. "May it please your Honor," he says, "between you and me, I am willing to say that I committed that crime alleged against me, but you must not ask me to make this confession before the world. You will have some regard to my feelings and to the feelings of my numerous and very respectable friends. Before the world therefore I shall persist in denying the crime. I trust however that you will duly consider all the circumstances and grant me a pardon." Pardon you! miscreant, the governor would say--pardon you when you are condemning the whole court and jury of injustice, and the witnesses of falsehood; pardon you while you set yourself against the whole administration of justice in the state? never! never! You are too proud to take your own place and appear in your own character; how can I rely on you to be a good citizen--how can I expect you to be anything better than an arch villain?

Let it be understood then that before we can trust in the mercy of God, we must really repent and make our confession as public as we have made our crime.

Suppose again that a man is convicted and sues for pardon, but will not confess at all. O, he says, I have no crimes to confess; I have done nothing particularly wrong; the reason of my acting as I have is that I have a desperately wicked heart. I cannot repent and never could. I don't know how it happens that I commit murder so easily; it seems to be a second nature to me to kill my neighbor; I can't help it. I am told that you are very good, very merciful; he says to the governor; they even say that you are love itself, and I believe it; you surely will grant me a pardon then, it will be so easy for you--and it is so horrible for me to be hung. You know I have done only a little wrong, and that little only because I could not help it; you certainly cannot insist upon my making any confession. What! have me hung because I don't repent? You certainly are too kind to do any such thing.

I don't thank you for your good opinion of me, must be the indignant reply; the law shall take its course; your path is to the gallows.

See that sinner; hear him mock God in his prayer: "trust in the mercy of God, for God is love." Do you repent? "I don't know about repentance--that is not the question; God is love--God is too good to send men to hell; they are Partialists and slander God who think that he ever sends any body to hell." Too good! you say; too good! so good that he will forgive whether the sinner repents or not; too good to hold the reins of his government

firmly; too good to secure the best interests of his vast kingdom! Sinner, the God you think of is a being of your own crazy imagination--not the God who built the prison of despair for hardened sinners--not the God who rules the universe by righteous law and our race also on a gospel system which magnifies that law and makes it honorable.

- 4. We must really make restitution so far as lies in our power. You may see the bearing of this in the case of a highway robber. He has robbed a traveller of ten thousand dollars, and is sentenced to State's prison for life. He petitions for pardon. Very sorry he is for his crime; will make any confession that can be asked, ever so public; but will he make restitution? Not he; no--he needs that money himself. He will give up half of it, perhaps, to the government; vastly patriotic is he all at once, and liberal withal; ready to make a donation of five thousand dollars for the public good! ready to consecrate to most benevolent uses a splendid sum of money; but whose money? Where is his justice to the man he has robbed? Wretch! consecrate to the public what you have torn from your neighbor and put it into the treasury of the government! No; such a gift would burn right through the chest! What would you think if the government should connive at such an abomination? You would abhor their execrable corruption.

See that man of the world. His whole business career is a course of over-reaching. He slyly thrusts his hands into his neighbor's pockets and thus fills up his own. His rule is uniformly to sell for more than a thing is worth and buy for less. He knows how to monopolize and make high prices, and then sell out his accumulated stocks. His mind is forever on the stretch to manage and make good bargains. But this man at last must prepare to meet God. So he turns to his money to make it answer all things. He has a large gift for God. Perhaps he will build a church or send a missionary--something pretty handsome at least to buy a pardon for a life about which his conscience is not very easy. Yes, he has a splendid bribe for God. Ah, but will God take it? Never! God burns with indignation at the thought. Does God want your price of blood--those gains of oppression? Go and give them back to the suffering poor whose cries have gone up to God against you. O shame to think to filch from thy brother and give to God! not merely rob Peter to pay Paul, but rob man to pay God! The pardon of your soul is not bought so!

- 5. Another condition is that you really reform.

Suppose there is a villain in our neighborhood who has become the terror of all the region round about. He has already murdered a score of defenseless women and children; burns down our houses by night, plunders and robs daily; and every day brings tidings of his crimes at which every ear tingles. None feel safe a moment. He is an arch and bloody villain. At last he is arrested; and we all breathe more easily. Peace is restored. But this miscreant having received sentence of death, petitions for pardon. He professes no penitence whatever, and makes not even a promise of amendment; yet the governor is about to give him a free pardon. If he does it, who will not say, He ought to be hung up himself by the neck till he is dead, dead! But what does that sinner say? "I trust," says he, "in the great mercy of God. I have nothing to fear." But does he reform? No. What good can the mercy of God do him if he does not reform?

- 6. You must go the whole length in justifying the law and its penalty.

Mark that convicted criminal. He doesn't believe that government has any right to take life for any crime; he demurs utterly to the justice of such a proceeding, and on this ground insists that he must have a pardon. Will he get it? Will the governor take a position which is flatly opposed to the very law and constitution which he is sworn to sustain? Will he crush the law to save one criminal, or even a thousand criminals? Not if he has the spirit of a ruler in his bosom. That guilty man if he would have mercy from the execution must admit the right of the law and of the penalty. Else he arrays himself against the law and cannot be trusted in the community.

Now hear that sinner. How much he has to say against his ill desert, and against the justice of eternal punishment. He denounces the laws of God as cruelly and unrighteously severe. Sinner, do you suppose God can forgive you while you pursue such a course? He would as soon repeal His law and vacate his throne. You make it impossible for God to forgive you.

- 7. No sinner can be a proper object of mercy who is not entirely submissive to all those measures of the government that have brought him to conviction,

Suppose a criminal should plead that there had been a conspiracy to waylay and arrest him--that witnesses had been bribed to give false testimony--that the judge had charged the jury falsely, or that the jury had given an unrighteous verdict; could he hope by such false allegations to get a pardon? Nay verily. Such a man cannot be trusted to sustain law and order in a community, under any government, human or divine.

But hear that sinner complain and cavil. Why, he says, did God suffer sin and temptation to enter this world at all? Why does God let the sinner live at all to incur a doom so dreadful? And why does God block up the sinner's path by his providence, and cut him down in his sins? Yet this very sinner talks about trusting in God's mercy! Indeed; while all the time he is accusing God of being an infinite tyrant and of seeking to crush the helpless, unfortunate sinner! What do these cavils mean? What are they but the uplifted voice of a guilty rebel arraigning his Maker for doing good and showing mercy to his own rebellious creatures? For it needs but a moment's thought to see that the temptation complained of is only a good placed before a moral agent to melt his heart by love. Yet against this the sinner murmurs, and pours out his complaints against God. Be assured that unless you are willing to go the full length of justifying all God does, he never can give you pardon. God has no option to pardon a self-justifying rebel. The interests of myriads of moral beings forbid his doing it. When you will take the ground most fully of justifying God, and condemning yourself, you place yourself where mercy can reach you, and then it surely will. Not before.

- 8. You must close in most cordially with the plan of salvation. This plan is based on the assumption that we deserve everlasting death and must be saved, if ever, by sovereign grace and mercy. Nothing can save but mercy--mercy which meets the sinner in the dust, prostrate, without an excuse or an apology, giving to God all the glory and taking to himself all the guilt and shame. There is hope for thee, sinner, in embracing this plan with all the heart.

IV. We now notice some mistakes into which many fall.

- 1. Many really trust in justice and not in mercy. They say, "God is just--God will do me no injustice--I mean to do as well as I can, and then I can safely leave myself in the hands of a just God." True, God will do you no injustice. You never need fear that. But how terrible if God should do you strict justice! How fearful if you get no mercy! If God does not show you infinite mercy, you are forever lost, as surely as you are a sinner! This trusting in God's justice is a fatal rock. The sinner who can do it calmly has never seen God's law and his own heart. The Psalmist did not say, I trust in the justice of God forever and ever.
- 2. Many trust professedly in the mercy of God without fulfilling the conditions on which only, mercy can be shown. They may hold on in such trusting till they die--but no longer.
- 3. Sinners do not consider that God cannot dispense with their fulfilling these conditions. He has no right to do so. They spring out of the very constitution of his government, from his very nature, and must therefore be strictly fulfilled. Sooner than dispense with their fulfillment, God would send the whole race, yea, the whole universe, to hell. If God were to set aside these conditions and forgive a sinner while unhumbled, impenitent, and unbelieving, he would upset his throne, convulse the moral universe, and kindle another hell in his own bosom.
- 4. Many are defeating their own salvation by self-justification. Pleas that excuse self, and cavils that arraign God stand alike and fatally in the way of pardon. Since the world began it has not been known that a sinner has found mercy in this state.
- 5. Many pretend to trust in mercy who yet profess to be punished for their sins as they go along. They hope for salvation through mercy, and yet they are punished for all their sins in this life. Two more absurd and self-contradictory things were never put together. Punished as much as they deserve here, and yet saved through mercy! Why don't they say it out that they shall be saved after death through justice? Surely if they are punished all they deserve as they go along, justice will ask no more after death.
- 6. Persons who in the letter plead for mercy, often rely really upon justice. The deep conviction of sin and ill-desert does not sink into their soul till they realize what mercy is, and feel that they can rely on nothing else.
- 7. Some are covering up their sins, yet dream of going to heaven. Do they think they can hide those sins from the Omniscient Eye? Do they think to cover their sins and yet it "prosper," despite of God's awful word?
- 8. We cannot reasonably ask for mercy beyond our acknowledged and felt guilt, and they mistake fatally who suppose that they can. Without a deep conviction of conscious guilt we cannot be honest and in earnest in supplicating mercy. Hear that man pray who thinks sin a trifle and its deserved punishment a small affair. "O Lord, I need a little mercy, only a little; my sins have been few and of small account; grant me, Lord, exemption from the brief and slight punishment which my few errors and defects may have deserved." Or hear that Universalist pray: "O Lord, thou knowest that I have been punished for my sins as I have passed along; I

have had a fit of sickness and various pains and losses, nearly or quite enough, thou knowest, to punish all the sins I have committed; now therefore, I pray thee to give me salvation through thy great mercy." How astonishing that some men should hold such nonsense! How can a Universalist pray at all? What should they pray for? Not for pardon, for on their principles they have a valid claim to exemption from punishment on the score of justice, as the criminal has who has served out his sentence in the State's prison. The only rational prayer that can be made is that God will do them justice and let them off, since they have already been punished enough. But why should they pray for this? God may be trusted to do justice without their praying for it. I don't wonder that Universalists pray but little; what have they to pray for? Their daily bread? Very well. But the mercy of God they need not on their scheme; for they suffer all they deserve. Pleasing delusion; flattering enough to human pride, but strange for rational minds, and horribly pernicious! Restoration takes substantially the same ground, only leaving a part of the penalty to be worked out in purgatory, but claiming salvation on the ground of justice and not mercy. Mercy can have no place in any system of Universalism. Every form of this system arrays God in robes of justice, inflexible, fearful justice;--yet these men trust they say in the mercy of God! But what have they done with the gospel--what with all the Bible says about free pardon to the guilty? They have thrust it out of the Bible; and what have they given us instead? Only justice, justice; punishment enough for sin in this world, or at least in a few years of purgatory: sin a trifle,--government a mere farce,--God a liar--hell a bugbear and a humbug; what is all this but dire blasphemy as ever came from hell?

If we ask for but little mercy, we shall get none at all. This may seem strange, but is none the less true. If we get any thing we must ask for great blessings. Suppose a man deserved to be hung, and yet asks only for a little favor; suppose he should say so, can he be forgiven? No. He must confess the whole of his guilt in its full and awful form, and show that he feels it in his very soul. So, sinner, must you come and confess your whole guilt as it is, or have no mercy. Come and get down, low, lower, infinitely low before God--and take mercy there. Hear that Universalist. All he can say at first is, "I thank God for a thousand things." But he begins to doubt whether this is quite enough. Perhaps he needs a little more punishment than he has suffered in this life; he sees a little more guilt; so he prays that God would let him off from ten years of deserved punishment in hell. And if he sees a little more guilt, he asks for a reprieve from so much more of punishment. If truth flashes upon his soul and he sees his own heart and life in the light of Jehovah's law, he gets down lower and lower, as low as he can, and pours out his prayer that God would save him from that eternal hell which he deserves. "O," he cries out, "can God forgive so great a sinner!" Yes, and by so much the more readily, by how much the more you humble yourself, and by how much the greater mercy you ask and feel that you need. Only come down and take such a position that God can meet you. Recollect the prodigal son, and that father running, falling on his neck, weeping, welcoming, forgiving! O! how that father's heart gushed with tenderness!

It is not the greatness of your sins, but your pride of heart that forbids your salvation. It is not anything in your past life, but it is your present state of mind that makes your salvation impossible. Think of this.

REMARKS.

You need not wait to use means with God to persuade him to save you. He is using means with you to persuade you to be saved. You act as if God could scarcely be moved by any possible entreaties and submissions to exercise mercy; Oh, you do not see how his great heart beats with compassion and presses the streams of mercy forth in all directions, pouring the river of the waters of life at your very feet, creating such a pressure of appeal to your heart, that you have to brace yourself against it, lest you should be persuaded to repent. O, do you see how God would fain persuade you, and break your heart in penitence, that He may bring you where He can reach you with forgiving mercy--where He can come and bless you without resigning his very throne!

To deny your desert of endless punishment is to render your salvation utterly impossible. God never can forgive you on this ground, because you are trying to be saved on the score of justice. You could not make your damnation more certain than you thus make it, if you were to murder every man you meet. You tie up the hands of mercy and will not let her pluck you from the jaws of death. It is as if your house were on fire, and you seize your loaded rifle to shoot down every man that comes with his bucket to help you. You stand your ground amid the raging element until you sink beneath the flames. Who can help you? What is that man doing who is trying to make his family believe Universalism? It is as if he would shoot his rifle at the very heart of Mercy every time she comes in view. He seems determined to drive off Mercy, and for this end plies all the enginery of Universalism, and throws himself into the citadel of this refuge of lies! O! what a work of death is this! Mercy shall not reach him or his family; so he seems determined--and Mercy cannot come. See how she bends from heaven--Jehovah smiles in love--and weeps in pity--and bends from the very clouds and holds out the pierced hand of the crucified One--But no! I don't deserve the punishment; away with the insult of a pardon offered through mere mercy! What can be more fatal, more damning, more ruinous to the soul?

You see very clearly why all are not saved. It is not because God is not willing to save all, but because they defeat the efforts God makes to save them. They betake themselves to every possible refuge and subterfuge; resist conviction of guilt, and repel every call of mercy. What ails those young men? What are they doing? Has God come down in His red wrath and vengeance, that they should rally all their might to oppose Him? O, no, He has only come in mercy--this is all--and they are fighting against his mercy, not his just retributions of vengeance. If this were his awful arm of vengeance, you would bow right soon, or break beneath its blow. But God's mercy comes in its soft whispers, (would you but realize it) it comes to win your heart--and what are you doing? You band yourselves together to resist its calls--you invent a thousand excuses--you run together to talk, and talk away all solemn thought--you run to some infidel or Universalist to find relief for an uneasy conscience. Ah, sinner this can do you no good. You flee away from God--why? What's the matter? Is God pouring down the floods of his great wrath? No, no; but Mercy has come, and would fain gather you under her outspread wings where storms of wrath can never come. But no, the sinner pleads against it--cavils, runs, fights, repels the angel of mercy--dashes from his lips the waters of life. Sinner, this scene is soon to close. The time is short. Soon God comes--death shakes his dart--that young man is sick--hear his groans. Are you going to die, my young friend? Are you ready? O, I don't know, I am in great pain. O! O! how can I live so? Alas, how can I die? I can't attend to it now--too late--too late! Indeed, young man, you are in weakness now. God's finger has touched you. O, if I could only tell you some of the death-bed scenes which I have witnessed--if I could make you see them, and hear the deep wailings of

unutterable agony as the soul quivered, shuddered, and fain would shrink away into annihilation from the awful eye--and was swept down swift to hell! Those are the very men who ran away from mercy! Mercy could not reach them, but death can. Death seizes its victim. See, he drags the frightened shrieking soul to the gate-way of hell; how that soul recoils--groans--what an unearthly groan--and he is gone! The sentence of execution has gone out and there is no reprieve. That sinner would not have mercy when he might; now he cannot when he would. All is over now.

Dying sinner, you may just as well have mercy today as not. All your past sins present no obstacle at all if you only repent and take the offered pardon. Your God proffers you life. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in your death, turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Why will you reject such offered life? And will you still persist? Be astonished, O ye heavens! Indeed if there ever was anything that filled the universe with astonishment, it is the sinner's rejection of mercy. Angels were astonished when they saw the Son of God made flesh, and when they saw him nailed to a tree--how much more now to see the guilty sinner, doomed to hell, yet spurning offered pardon! What do they see! That sinner putting off and still delaying and delaying still, until--what? Until the last curtain falls, and the great bell tolls, tolls, tolls the awful knell of the sinner's death eternal! Where is that sinner? Follow him--down he goes, weeping, wailing, along the sides of the pit--he reaches his own final home; in "his own place," now and forevermore! Mercy followed him to the last verge of the precipice, and could no longer. She has done her part.

What if a spirit from glory should come and speak to you five minutes--a relative, say--perhaps your mother--what would she say? Or a spirit from that world of despair--O could such a one give utterance to the awful realities of that prison house, what would he say? Would he tell you that the preacher has been telling you lies? Would he say, don't be frightened by these made-up tales of horror? O, no, but that the half has not been told you and never can be. O, how he would press you if he might to flee from the wrath to come!

The Old Man and The New

Lecture IX
May 21, 1845

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Text.--Eph. 4:22-24: "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

It will be my object in speaking upon this text to show,

I. What constitutes the old man.

II. What constitutes the new man.

III. What is implied in putting off the one and putting on the other.

IV. Sundry mistakes often made on this subject.

I. What constitutes the old man.

- 1. There are two sources from which all human activity, or in other words, all mental life flows. I use the term, life, now, just as we do when we apply it to the body. In the latter case we mean by it the activity, or rather the active state of the various organs. This is life; its opposite, death, is the cessation of activity, and a passing out of that state in which action is the law of our existence into another in which absolute inaction is the law.

Applying the term life now to the mind, we mean to denote its active state; and our remark is that there are two and only two ultimate causes or springs of all this activity; one, fallen human nature; the other, the Spirit of God.

Mental activity is first developed through our connection with a physical body. The new-born infant has constitutional wants; its appetites demand gratification; and its mind is thus first aroused to exercise. Here human nature begins to develop mental activity. We would not be understood to imply that this first action of the infant is sinful; it manifestly is not unless the intelligence is so far developed as to take cognizance of right and wrong;--the Bible every where assuming that some knowledge of obligation must be present, or sin cannot be. All that we can say now on this point is that our earliest mental activity is prompted by our connection with the body; and that the constitutional demands of the body lead to indulgence which, though not sinful before any knowledge of duty exists, yet becomes the main-spring of foul selfishness when this knowledge is developed and in the very face of it we prefer to please ourselves rather than God.

Another source of mental activity is the Spirit of God. We do not mean by this that the Spirit is a necessary cause of mental action, in such a sense that the mind under the Spirit's influence acts of necessity and not freely; we only mean that the Spirit excites to action, and is the occasion of such action as would not take place without the Spirit. Thus the Bible represents God as working in us to will and to do, and Christians as walking with the Spirit, or after the Spirit and not after the flesh. The Spirit begets a peculiar kind of action, the very opposite of that produced by the workings of selfishness.

- 2. The old or first man, is the carnal mind, or principle of selfishness. It begins with caring for the flesh even before its action can have any moral character, and continues to care for the flesh ever after. Hence it is called a carnal mind, or a minding of the flesh. Its characteristic feature is that its own gratification is its supreme end.

- 3. It is called a "man" because it is the hidden source and cause of outward activity. It would seem as if the Bible language contemplated a hidden agent, working underneath the visible exterior of each individual, in the one class of character producing selfish action and in the other class, the opposite. These inward-working agents--the old man and the new--correspond to the ultimate intention of the will and control all our proximate volitions in the same way that we see it done by the ultimate intention. Indeed, they are but other names for the same thing. The ultimate intention of course always governs all our voluntary conduct. We never can act without intending something; and all our lesser subordinate volitions are only the necessary result of our ultimate purpose, this ultimate purpose being always either to please ourselves or to please God.
- 4. My last remarks substantially include my text; viz., that the "man" in the sense of our text is the reigning disposition. It is that which the mind is disposed, or rather which the mind voluntarily disposes and sets itself to do. The mind deliberately chooses its great end of existence--chooses the kind of good it will seek, and then of course sets itself to secure this kind of good by every means in its power. Hence arises a disposition of the mind: the mind shaping its efforts--all its mental activity to secure the good of its own ultimate end.
- 5. This is also an ultimate and efficient intention. In the form of the old man it is a deep and hearty committal of the soul to self-gratification. It controls all the activity of all unregenerate men. You do not see the old man with the external eye, but by its ceaseless development we learn its character and omnipresent agency.

II. What constitutes the new man.

- 1. It is a spiritual mind, or a disposition to please God instead of self. It is right over against the carnal selfish state. The mind is fully committed to pleasing God, so that this becomes the chief end for which the individual lives and acts. The new man is thoroughly committed to do the will of God just as the old man is to do the bidding of his carnal impulses. The former lives for God; the latter for himself.

Besides these two ultimate ends, no other can be conceived. All voluntary agents will seek to please either God or themselves. All action, therefore, results from one or the other of these ultimate intentions. And this is true not only of all men but of all other intelligent beings--of angels and of devils.

- 2. These two dispositions divide all mankind into two classes. Hence there are, as we often say, two sorts of men; and so the Bible says. The Bible represents all men as either saints or sinners; holy or unholy; spiritual or carnal; children of God or children of the devil. It makes them either old men or new men; born of the flesh, or born of the Spirit. The old state is first in order, and all pass into the channel of self-gratification which leads directly to it, unless some may be enlightened and converted by the Spirit from the womb. With this exception all others begin a course of self-gratification from their birth, which becomes sinful as soon as they know that God forbids their making this the supreme end of their existence and yet refuse to obey God.

The new man is born of the Spirit--born from above; the Spirit of God continually begets

his moral activity, leading him thoroughly to renounce self, and commit his whole being to do the pleasure of God.

- 3. The old man is corrupt according to and in compliance with the deceitful lusts. So says our text. By lust is meant in the scriptures all forms of sensual desire. It includes the entire circle of our physical propensities. All these the old man commits himself to obey. He lives for their gratification. They are called deceitful for the obvious reason that the pleasure they promise in their gratification is always delusive. They flatter only to destroy.
- 4. The new man is sometimes spoken of as being the Lord from heaven, or Christ formed in the soul. So it is, not however in the sense of a physical creation, but in this sense; Christ by His Spirit begets, produces, a state of mind in which we voluntarily commit our whole being to God. Then we become like Christ, and it is therefore as if Christ Himself were formed within us, His very Spirit and temper now reigning in our hearts, so that it seems as if Christ Himself were there, and indeed He is there by His spiritual and most efficient presence.

III. We are to inquire what is implied in putting off the one and putting on the other.

- 1. Regeneration. This putting off the old man and putting on the new is precisely what the Bible means by regeneration. This is the change of heart of which the Bible speaks.
- 2. Perseverance is also implied. We are to continue in this state. Paul is writing to Christians and urges them to put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man. Of course he must mean that they should continue to do what they began to do at their conversion, and maintain in constant vigor that activity which then commenced.
- 3. It implies the death of the old man. This does not mean the annihilation of the appetites and the physical constitution: no, the former body still exists, and you must eat and drink for its support no less than before. It only means that all these appetites and propensities are held under the control of God's revealed will, to be indulged only in accordance with that will. They are no longer our masters; we have no master but God.

Some on this point have run into great confusion; some have stumbled into grievous error. Holding the doctrine of physical depravity, they make the Apostle say--"Put away your constitutional appetites, annihilate the flesh; literally crucify its constitutional propensities." But the Apostle means only this: Let them not control your moral activity. Hold them evermore subordinate to the will of God.

It should be observed that these physical appetites are not necessarily the source of our activity. We may act from love and obedience to God, these appetites still existing within us; for we may indulge them only because we rightly conclude that this will please God, and only so far as this seems to be the case.

- 4. Putting off the old, and putting on the new man, implies entire consecration to God. It is equivalent to putting away all selfishness, and acting only and alone from real benevolence; renouncing the dominion of the flesh, and submitting to the dominion of the Spirit. This, of

course, is entire consecration to God. There is no middle or third state. He who puts off the old man must put on the new man; for the mind will have some spring of action, some ultimate end to gain, some prime source of its activity. It must therefore turn from one of these to the other. In fact the mind never puts off the old man except that it may put on the new. We never really renounce self except when the Spirit draws us to choose God as our supreme portion.

- 5. Heavenly mindedness is implied. God and heavenly things are now its chosen objects of supreme affection, so that the mind now runs towards its chief love, as it did when this chief love was earthly good. There is now a heavenly state of mind by the same law which before produced a carnal and earthly state, namely, "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also."
- 6. Consequently the conversation will be of heavenly things. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
- 7. So will the thoughts also be of heaven. The mind turns toward God with delight. O, how does it dwell on the great things of God in the night watches, reposing sweetly on His universal providence, on His revealed promises, on the bosom of His ineffable love.
- 8. The treasure is in heaven. No longer does the soul seek its chief good here. Its portion is above. A pilgrim and a stranger here, the new man seeks a better country, even a heavenly. Content to forego earth for the sake of heaven, he lets off his eager pursuit of things temporal; pursues them for a totally different end, so far as it seems his duty to pursue them at all; and really has no other God but Jehovah. His God is in heaven.
- 9. Selfishness is put away and Christ put on in all things. This is the very essence of the Apostle's meaning. The new man put on, is the yoke of Christ taken, the Spirit of Christ imbibed and acted out; the law of love, supreme to God, and impartial to man, becomes supreme; a spirit of self sacrifice ensues, and the individual no longer asks what will gratify me, but what will please God. Now he puts on Christ, and grows up into Him in all things, studying continually to conform every thought and act to the great law of his being--imitation of Christ and obedience to His will.

IV. We are to notice several mistakes into which persons are wont to fall.

- 1. They try to reform the old man, not considering that he admits of no reform to any purpose. Just consider what the old man is--namely, a supreme intention to please self; and you will see at once that this intention can admit of no reform for the better. You may change its direction from one form of selfish indulgence to another, but such reform as this, though very common, is yet perfectly useless, for it leaves the heart as completely enslaved to sin as before. Thus, often men change the form of their selfishness without in the least changing its moral quality. A man removing from a community where one form of selfish indulgence is popular, to another where it is unpopular, will probably adapt himself to his new circumstances, and pursue the most productive form of selfish gratification. Why not? Selfish happiness is his object; why shall he not make the most he can of it, and pursue it in the most hopeful way? This change may seem to him perhaps to be conversion, especially if he substitutes a more refined for a grosser form of selfishness; a form on which moral and Christian society frown, for one on which they smile.

Yet in this very change he may be more thoroughly selfish than ever before; with this additional mischief that he is now deceiving himself, and blinding his eyes for the fatal plunge into perdition. All he has done, is just an attempt to reform the old man. It is no real reformation. He may put on a new face--it is only a mask; a new coat, a Sunday suit, but this changes not the hidden man of the heart.

- 2. The old and the new man in many things conduct externally alike. Both eat and drink; both use the necessaries of life, but with this broad, fundamental distinction; the one has no higher, and no other end than self gratification; while the other both eats and drinks for the glory of God. The one aims only to please himself; the other only to please God. Both may eat when hunger prompts; both may find pleasure in the gratification of the demands of nature; but while the one has no higher end than the gratification, the other finds a double relish in the gratitude of his heart to God, the giver; eats, that thereby he may have strength to live for God; and takes no more and no other food than he supposes God would have him. This makes the broadest possible distinction between the old and new man.
 - Again, the old man and the new man both equally may marry, and be given in marriage; yet, observe, with this broad difference in the ultimate end had in view; the old man does it to please himself, and the new man to please God. The old man, remaining old, can do this from no other end than to please himself; the new man, "acting in the spirit of a new creature," can possibly have no other end than to please God.
 - Again, both attend apparently in the same way to the common business of life. Both may be behind the same counter, selling off the same lot of goods, at the same prices; yet one is there doing his own will, and the other doing God's will; the one pleasing his own self--the other pleasing his Master. Or, both the old man and the new may be following the plow, each to raise the same crop, yet each with a perfectly opposite ultimate end in view; the one to gratify self, the other to gratify God. Their motives and ultimate end are just as really different now as they will be when one of them shall be in heaven and the other in hell. Then, as now, the real difference will be only this; the one is supremely selfish; the other is supremely benevolent; the one caring only to please himself, and the other only to please God.

There are two students, pursuing the same studies, in the same class, attending the same recitation; they study equally well, and may appear externally in all points alike; yet one is the old man and the other the new; the former, striving to mount up over the heads of all his class-mates, panting for fame, seeking great things for himself; but the other has bowed his whole heart to God's will, studies only because God would have him, and seeks only to please God by doing all His will.

Or take still another view. There are two young men, both preaching the gospel; both pray apparently much alike; both have the external air of piety; yet the Omniscient Eye sees one of them supremely selfish, selfish and supremely so in his prayers, for in all, his eye looks never beyond his own good. The other has crucified himself, lives now for God and for the good of

his race, preaches and prays out of love to souls and love to Christ; this is a new man and the other is the old man.

- 3. Hence, the external developments being so similar, it is a common mistake not to distinguish between them. It is often impossible to know the hearts of others from mere external manifestations. For instance, you all come into this house of God to worship, apparently alike; how can I tell who of you come in the spirit of the old man and who in the spirit of the new?

Persons often fail to make this discrimination in their own case. They might know their own hearts if they would honestly and deeply search themselves, and take cognizance of their motives and of all the deep springs of their action; but often, very often they do not, and hence deceive themselves. They never go to the bottom of their own hearts.

- 4. For want of making this discrimination, hypocrites are prone to flatter themselves while yet in their own deep corruption. They put on a decent exterior and are often comparing their life with the life of real, and spiritual Christians, inferring hence that themselves are real Christians. Indeed they often take pride in making their own external conduct quite unexceptionable, and hope to get a double reward for this good life, the gratification of their pride here and heaven hereafter.

No mistake in religion is more common or more fatal than the one of which I am speaking. Whole masses of professors go after the world in seasons of declension, that is, as soon as they can do so without disturbing their hope of salvation. They want to be as good as most others, and this they seem to suppose will bring them up into heaven with the mass. This being secured, the more they get of this world the better. How purely selfish! In a revival they wake themselves up, often tardily, yet when they must, they yield to the general influence and come along; bustle perhaps full enough for their credit and seem to reform, but this is only an attempt to reform the old man and his deeds-- nothing else.

- 5. You may see the mistake often made by sinners in condemning the conduct of Christians. They condemn Christians for doing the same things as they themselves are doing. They say, "You, professedly holy men, eat and drink, buy and sell, plow and study, just as we do; wherein are you better than we?" The mistake is, that the wicked do not consider that while the external course is the same, the motive and the moral character of the course may be in the one case right, and in the other utterly wrong. The wicked man has no right to assume that the Christian acts from the same motives as himself, merely because he pursues the same business. This may be, and often is arrant censoriousness.
- 6. Many mistake the apathy of the old man for the peace of the new man. The old man sometimes becomes apathetic, vastly calm and indifferent to passing events, and this seems to him like that deep calm which the Christian feels because his own Father is at the helm. Nothing can be a greater mistake. The sinner's soul is a perfect stranger to the Christian's deep heavenly, peace-begetting trust in God.
- 7. Many mistake the zeal and legal bustle of the old man for the holy fervor of the new man.

Legalists are wont to become very zealous; they strive hard to do some great thing, and often make a splendid bustle, and you would think that verily they were about to convert the world in a twelve-month; now they look back upon these developments, and comparing themselves with active Christians they judge themselves to have the holy fervor and divine love of apostles and martyrs. Yet in fact their motives and spirit are just as unlike the real Christians as hell is unlike heaven. They are the Jehus of the Church; "come, say they, come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." Perhaps they really think that they outstrip most real Christians.

- 8. Often men mistake the impatience of the old man for the holy jealousy of the new man. The old man frets at sinners because they sin, feels indignant at such horrible wrong-doing; but points out to him his own sins, and presses his conscience to repent and confess, and O! he does not think that wrong under his circumstances; he has nothing particular to confess. His heart is not quite so indignant against sin in himself as against sin in others. In his own case he sees various extenuating circumstances which more than alter, which quite reverse the case. Thus he reveals himself.

Yet he often takes credit to himself for holy indignation against sin. The real Christian feels a holy indignation; Christ felt it and often could not repress it; yet it was a holy jealousy for the honor of God, and not a fitful irritation against wrong doing because it might injure some of his own interests, or because it offended against his virtuous principles.

- 9. Often men fail to distinguish between the selfish sorrow of the old man and the godly sorrow of the new.

The new man remembers his former sins with great sorrow; his soul is weighed down within him and often his tears gush out in the very streets as he is reminded of his past deeds of shame and guilt; but not so the old man. He has a sort of sorrow for his old sins, especially if they have affected his reputation. But you do not see him loathing himself in his own sight for all his secret abominations. Yet he counts his own tears for sin, and things he has the sorrows of the real penitent.

- 10. Many mistake the selfish joys of the old man for the spiritual joys of the new man. The former however begin and end in selfishness; the man is pleased when good comes to himself, that is all. The latter rejoices in God, yea in God, his exceeding joy. He is happy when others get good, though himself has none.
- 11. Often people mistake the hope of the old man, for the hope of the new man. Each have their hopes. The sinner hopes to be happy in heaven--by what means is a thing of small care or thought to him. The Christian's hope is beautifully sketched by the apostle, "We know," he says, "that when Christ shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure." The hope of the new man rests on being holy, not merely nor directly on being happy. No. His glorious hope is that he shall be perfectly, universally, eternally holy. Give him this, and you gratify the ruling passion of his soul.

- 12. A mistake is often made of the turbulence and fanaticism of the old man for the holy firmness and faithfulness of the new. See that man finding fault--how censorious, how turbulent; he can denounce everything in most unmeasured terms, yet under the self-soothing pretense of being faithful to his fellow men. He means to clear his skirts of the blood of souls, so he traduces his brethren and measures off denunciations in a most terrible manner. Yet ask him why he does this, and he will refer you to Christ and to the prophets of old who had the word of the Lord shut up in their bones; and he says, did not Christ denounce? Little is this man like Christ that is trying to cast out devils through Beelzebub. With the very spirit of Satan, he would fain drive Satan out of his brethren!

Not so the new man. He is firm and faithful, but his spirit breathes gentleness and love. I do not say that every Christian is always bold and firm, nor that all who have been converted continue through life to act out the new man and him only; happy if it were so. But while they do act the new man, they are firm without malevolence; faithful without bitter denunciation.

- 13. The effervescence of the old man is mistaken for the unction of the new man. Yet the difference between the two is most radical. In each there is excitement, yet while the one is the boiling up of a selfish heart, the other is a holy unction from heaven.
- 14. The presumption of the old man is mistaken for the faith of the new. The former often talks of his great faith, assumes to have more than his brethren, but it is all presumption; he pursues such a life and has such a spirit that he has no right to trust God for anything but damnation.
- 15. Many mistake the self-will of the old man for the conscientiousness of the new man. They are obstinate, unyielding; yet it is only self-will--a committal of the will, and not the demand of an enlightened conscience.
- 16. The constitutional tendencies of the old man are mistaken for the spiritual developments of the new man. The natural humanity and kindness, for instance, of the old man are mistaken for gospel benevolence; conscientiousness of natural character, for that conscientiousness which is created, trained and expanded in the school of Christ.

REMARKS.

1. None but a spiritual mind will really make the distinctions which I have been pointing out. No others care to make them; and moreover, the qualities of the new man can never be clearly apprehended without experience. Yet it is a vastly desirable attainment to be able to distinguish between what originates with self, and what originates with the Spirit of God. How rarely made! From my acquaintance with Christians, I think this point is but feebly developed. They don't distinguish between pleasing self and pleasing God. Yet no two things can be more opposite to each other, and none should be more carefully distinguished. In eating, in all labor, in study, we should be careful to know whether we are doing all to please God, or to please ourselves.

Some years since, my mind was greatly exercised on this point. Almost every waking moment the question would press upon me--Why am I doing this and why that? This led me to settle in my mind a

thousand points of difficulty, and thus became of great service to my soul. How can we labor together with the Spirit of God in our own sanctification, unless we get hold of the real distinctions between holy consecration, and refined selfishness?

2. On this subject sinners constantly deceive and flatter themselves. They take credit for much that they do as good which is purely selfish. Thus they build themselves up on self-righteousness, but on a foundation which the last flood will sweep away and great will be the fall of it.

3. We see how and why sinners constantly misjudge Christians. They see Christians doing some of the same things externally which themselves are doing, and then they falsely judge that the Christian acts from the same motive as himself. Thus they take a flattering unction to themselves, and wrong both their Christian neighbors and their own souls.

4. The old man is constantly corrupt. There is nothing good in him. Paul might well say of the old man, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." No good originates there. You can say no good thing of the old man. He is wholly evil. You can place no confidence in him for anything really good. He is wholly selfish, and will do anything to carry his selfish ends.

5. No evil can be said of the new man. Understanding by this term the new, regenerate heart, it does nothing wrong. The converted person may sin, but if he does, it is because the old man is not dead, but rises up and rules, gaining a temporary ascendancy.

6. The old man is exceedingly tenacious of life. It seems as if you might kill him a thousand times and yet he lives. You gain the victory over him; you crush him down and he seems breathless; you flatter yourself he is dead and buried, but ere long up he comes--the old disgusting carcass, breathing out its fouled stench; your spiritual strength becomes weakness, and perhaps under this baleful influence, you return like the dog to his vomit. Ah! that old man, how he will live and keep coming up; and so there will be a tendency to this more or less while we are in the flesh;; we must watch, and often have to fight, and often kill our old man over and over again. Yet through Christ we may come off more than conquerors.

This leads me to say that a spiritual man is exceedingly jealous of the old man. He will always be watching his old enemy, and will never trust him at all. Yet, alas, even the spiritual are sometimes deceived by the old man and are lured into a selfish state before they are fully aware of it. But when they come to see it, O, how they loath the abomination! I have known persons so deeply disgusted with themselves for their own selfishness as actually to vomit. O, how horrid and how loathsome! That young man goes out to preach. He has prepared his sermon. But when he was studying it out and making it up, something whispered--"Now get in some choice and splendid paragraphs--this very classical and elegant expression, that fine philosophical illustration--show the people that you are a scholar and a genius." Well, he has made up his sermon and goes to the pulpit--spouts it off--takes good care to make a good impression for himself; at length returns to his home and his closet; there the truth flashes upon him--serving myself--serving myself--none else but self--not Christ, but my own great self! O! how he loathes this abomination! He is disgusted, and turns away from himself as if he had met the very devil! He is ready to vomit or even spit in his own face! O, young man, that is a bad business--such letting up of self--such a resurrection of the old man in your heart. Beware!

The converted man falls into selfishness, but let him see it, and how he loathes it! Horrible! Detestable! He would fain spue his very self out of his own soul!

Here you may see who is really the new man. No better test of the new life can be had than this.

Beloved, how is this with you? Does the religion you possess make you new creatures in Christ Jesus, or does it leave your old selfishness still reigning, only somewhat dressed over perhaps, and fitted out sometimes in a Sunday suit; how is this? O, there is nothing that so perils the souls of men in this Christian land and in this passing age, as a refining the manners, and polishing the exterior of the old man, till he shall pass for that new man which is truly born of God, and molded into His divine image!

Coming Up through Great Tribulation

Lecture X
June 4, 1845

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Rev. 7:14,15: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

In discussing this subject, I shall attempt to show--

I. That great tribulations are the common lot of saints in every age and nation.

II. What these tribulations consist in.

III. The reasons why god causes christians to pass through such scenes.

I. Great tribulations are the common lot of saints in every age and nation.

It is most striking to observe how often and in how many various ways this fact is taught in the Bible. Everywhere throughout the writings of prophets or apostles, whether in its history or poetry, in the diaries of saints or in the precepts and promises of their Lord, the Bible teaches that the saints are moving on to glory through much tribulation. This fact stands out upon the very face of the Bible.

You cannot read your Bible with any attention, without seeing it in bold relief on almost every page. It is every where implied; every where assumed. We are told how they passed through fiery trials; of Moses we are told that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin, as if to go with God's people must be of course to suffer affliction. But I need not stop to quote passages of which the Bible is full. Christ told His disciples that they must expect tribulation. All the great leaders of the Church in every age have found it true.

II. Some of the things in which these tribulations consist.

- 1. One is, persecution. In every age the wicked have persecuted the righteous. This persecution may take on different types in various ages according to external circumstances; yet it is still true--the wicked hate and persecute God's people. It is vain to expect, while the world lies in sin, that anybody will live godly without suffering persecution. It may take the form of cold and sneering contempt; it may develop itself in the venom of slander, or in the malignity of opposition to the gospel; but shut in as it may be by external forces, it will still burst out somewhere and annoy the saints of God.
- 2. Another form is that of Satanic temptation. The true children of God must always expect to be tempted by Satan. He has small cause to tempt the wicked; generally he can lead them captive at his will with little trouble, so great is their selfishness and so controlling their constitutional tendency to self-indulgence; but let them attempt to break quite away from his grasp and they must expect a fierce and frightful struggle. Real saints always have conflicts with Satan, and especially when they are about to snap the last bond of his that holds them. Satan growls hideously when he sees them about to ascend the table land of promise beyond his control. At this point they should look for a fierce struggle.

Again, saints often suffer much from spiritual desertion. Saints in all ages have had seasons of spiritual desertion in which the light of God's countenance has been withdrawn. I do not mean that in these cases God abandons them so as not to be in them and with them, and so as not to be indeed a Father to them, seeking ever their best good. I only mean that for the best of reasons He hides His face, and leaves them to grope awhile in darkness and great agony. Some of the bitterest scenes of anguish I ever saw have occurred in such cases. One man I knew intimately who had lived for some time in unclouded communion with God, often enjoying visions of divine glory most enrapturing, but for some just cause God withdrew this light of His face, and His deserted child wailed and groaned in agony. He fell to the floor and rolled in anguish, refusing to be comforted. No physician ever saw a patient suffer more, or seem in keener pain.

I am aware that this is among the extreme cases; yet I have seen many of the same sort, and similar cases are by no means infrequent.

Abraham knew what it is to have a horror of great darkness come upon his soul; nor he alone. Many others know what this means. Saints in every age have known it.

These are among the most severe trials they have or can have. Often they would not suffer more in the flames of martyrdom than they do under these hidings of the face of

God. The man whose case I just now mentioned might better have burned at the stake than have endured the agony he did. The history of the church has taught us abundantly that under any amount of outward losses and pains, the soul may still be calm and peaceful, nay joyful, if the light of God shine on it. What Christian would not promptly say, Give me the light of God's face, and then I can bear the loss of all things else. All are not so much to my present enjoyment each moment as my God.

- 3. Another portion of these tribulations consists in the Christian's struggle with his own weaknesses and infirmities. I allude now particularly to those which result from the flesh and from habits of sensual indulgence. It often happens that these pernicious habits, during a long career of indulgence acquire the rigidity and strength of iron. Hence it costs the convert a mighty struggle to overcome them.

Some years since a man came into this place and called to see me at my study, who had long been a slave to the habit of using tobacco. When he came to see the claims of God upon his conscience to exercise self-control and self-denial, he was thrown into a fearful conflict. He fell on the floor of my study, and groaned and wailed out in agony, "I am an undone man. I never can subdue this tyrant appetite." Nor is this a solitary or a very peculiar case. Every saint who attempts to overcome and hold in complete subjection to reason and the will of God all his constitutional tendencies to self-indulgence will find work enough for severe conflict. Indeed were the whole diary of some Christians to be written out on this subject, you would see the drawing of many a battlefield, and you might be amazed to learn that the subjection of the flesh costs so many struggles, tears, and groans, and so much prayer ere victory is gained.

The pastor of a church near Boston told me of one of his church members, a commodore in the navy, that in his struggles with one particular temptation, he often lay in agony whole nights, rolling on the floor and groaning like a wounded soldier in his blood, in such mental anguish and conflict as his athletic frame could scarce sustain. Yet he was a bold man, and could have faced the cannon's mouth undaunted. This was with him no quailing of timid sensibilities before imaginary evil; it was a real conflict with a hostile power of fearful strength in his own flesh.

Yet even in this case there is nothing very peculiar, certainly not in the nature of the conflict. Almost every person who has risen to adult years in the indulgence of his appetites, will find ample occasion for fierce struggles, groans, and agony.

There is no help for these protracted and terrific struggles, but in Christ. When His mild but mighty voice commands these agitated waves of passion, "Peace, be still;" suddenly there is a great and most blessed calm. O, how blessed if the whole church might learn that in Christ there is victory over both the flesh and the devil--indeed over every enemy that can rise up against our souls.

Again, many of these tribulations are occasioned by the perversion of the sensibility and the weakness of the intellect.

- 4. The sensibility have been grievously perverted by a long and greedy indulgence in sin, it becomes inevitable that God should compel its development in some other direction. Perhaps it is sometimes inevitable that He should wither our sensibility to some specific form of sinful pleasure by making us drink the bitter dregs of that same cup. He gives us the grief and disappointment which belong to that kind of indulgence and thus wakes up a different class of sensibilities. Through this pathway of flame, we may enter the haven of spiritual peace. How much it sometimes costs our Spiritual Teacher to bring us quite over from loving earthly good intensely, to loving as intensely the solid good of His presence and favor!

The intellect too, long crippled or perhaps knotted up by sin, must with much pains be unraveled and developed, and often in the school of tribulation. How many of God's people can testify that afflictions have made them really think as they never thought before, and consequently take views of truth never before taken.

Again, we must not omit to notice that many of the Christian's tribulations results from impaired health, poverty, losses, disappointments. With this fact every one is abundantly familiar. It enters into the experience and observation of every day life.

III. The reason why God causes His children to pass through such scenes.

These tribulations are often, properly speaking, unavoidable. By this is meant that the state of the world being what it is, nothing less than a miracle can entirely prevent the occurrence of tribulations. Thus, the world being as wicked as it is and as absolutely under the dominion of the devil, it would need as many miracles as there are saints and particular events, to shield every saint continually from being persecuted by the wicked.

The same substantially may be said of all those trials which result from the usual course of nature and of providence; for example, from sickness, losses, bereavements.

But again, very many of these trials are sent from the hand of God as parts of our needful discipline.

- 1. The spirit of a child of God needs to be subdued. The Bible represents God's people as being like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, in which case of course, they need to be "broken" before they can be safely used in the service of their Master. It should be observed, however, that this expression is used of the corrupt state of the ancient Jewish church, and therefore, as used by Jeremiah, may denote a really unconverted state. This seems probable, especially because Ephraim is immediately afterwards represented as praying--"Turn thou me, and I shall be turned:" and then as saying, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented." We may however plainly infer from the passage, that if God's real children apostatize into a rebellious state, God will follow them with His discipline till He breaks them into a submissive and docile spirit. Of course He can be satisfied with nothing short of this, and never ought to be.

Those of us who have children understand this. You know it costs you much trial and many tears often before you have completed the painful work of thoroughly subduing your children, as far as you can carry on the process. How much more then when God takes up the same sort of labor, and pushes it to the radical cure of the heart; when He

does not stop short as you sometimes do with mere external reform; and much more still, when it is considered that you wisely undertake your task while your children are yet young and consequently pliable; while God often and indeed usually has to carry His course of discipline into the rigorous and fixed habits of adult years. He takes up a fresh case perhaps after years of woefully perverse training, after the worst of sinful habits are formed, and knit together into the very fibers of the soul. O what a work is this to tear out these strong roots of sin, and wrench off these attachments by which the soul has suffered itself to be bound to sinful pursuits and pleasure! No wonder it should cost the saint of God many a trial ere he can say; "My soul is even as a weaned child." To subdue self-will is therefore the first step in this needful discipline

On this point however it should be well considered that this struggle will be long or short--will be sore, terrific, heart-rending, or will terminate soon in the sweetest submission, according as the individual shall attempt to do it mainly in his own strength, or shall take hold by faith of the promised strength of God. Let him fight out this battle alone by dint of resolutions, vows, mental struggles, and he will find toil enough to crush and weary out an archangel; but let him look up submissively and confidently into the face of his Savior, saying, "Save, Lord, that I perish not," -- let him throw his arms round the neck of this Heavenly Helper, and before he is aware the work is done, and his "soul is like the chariots of Amminadab."

- 2. The next object is to correct and duly develop the sensibility. After the will has been subdued in conversion, and yet even more thoroughly by a process of subsequent trial, the sensibility may be still but imperfectly rectified. It may have been long trained to a course of monstrous development, so as to exhibit a really monstrous enlargement towards some forms of sinful pleasure. The consequence of this must be a constant tendency to fall under temptations in that direction.

The only remedy is for God to subdue and purify the sensibility. This He does in part by trials. He throws the Christian into deep waters; gives him gall and wormwood to drink; stirs up and draws out all the keenest sensibilities of the soul, until its old habitudes are thoroughly broken up. He pushes on this work, overturning and still overturning; fouling every fountain of sinful pleasure, quickening the sensibility to other moods of action; pushing the law-work of conviction until the soul really feels the bitterness of sinning, and turns with irrepressible loathing from those pleasures which it has so long trained itself to relish. The convicting power of the Spirit, co-operating often with afflictions from God's providence, brings the soul into deep trouble; the searching process goes on and develops more and more the fearful fact that the sensibility is too keenly alive to earthly good and far too insensible to heavenly; still God pushes the trial, until the sensibility seems to let go the earthly and be satisfied with the heavenly. In a certain respect, this process renews the scene of the soul's first conversion: the individual is brought to loathe those sinful pleasures he once relished so keenly, and then he turns with all his heart to those pleasures which flow immediately from God's own right hand. Smitten by the law till sinful pleasures are embittered, he turns to the gospel of infinite grace and finds that now his soul can feel in view of these blessed realities.

The sensibility of most wicked men is not developed at all towards the great law of God. Keenly alive to every thing else, they are really dead to this. Its precepts and its penalties alike affect them not. Why? Because their sensibilities are strongly developed towards selfish pleasure and towards worldly objects, but little or perhaps none at all towards these spiritual objects. Hence such persons need to be searched and smitten all the pieces and their souls agonized with conviction, before they will let off their keen sensibility to sinful pleasure and throw their souls out in another and opposite direction. This work is not usually if ever finished at the soul's first conversion. The radical cure of the sensibility demands yet another, a longer, often a different process. As a matter of fact, God very often secures this result by afflictions. Almost all Christians who have had much experience in the divine life can testify to this. They know how God has dried up the current of their sensibility towards selfish good till He has left them nothing but Himself to love, and then has drawn out their hearts towards Himself until they felt that this is bliss enough for them.

It is a sweet consideration connected with this point, that like a kind-hearted parent, God always prefers the milder mode of attracting the soul, rather than the more painful one of compulsion. The latter is adopted only as an alternative when the other utterly fails. It is only when the love and the cross of Jesus fail to touch and command our sensibility, that God pours wormwood into our cup of idolatrous pleasure, and compels us to give Him our hearts.

It often happens that Christians under trial fail to understand the philosophy of God's dealings with themselves. Hence they are greatly stumbled. Yet if they would study their own moral state and the manifest result of tribulations as developed in a thousand cases under their own eye, they would see that often the design is simply to discipline and rectify the sensibility.

- 3. Another reason for sending tribulations is to develop the intelligence. Unconverted men often think they know much on religious subjects, while in fact they know almost nothing. They are mere children. Perhaps their minds have never been thoroughly roused to action on any subject. Hence the necessity of great intellectual development. For this end how often does God make use of great tribulations. What Christian has not observed that when God would really wake up his intelligence, He first throws his soul into a state of deep agitation and agony, so that the mind seems to heave like a volcano; the intelligence is wrought up to a state of most intense activity, on the rack to get hold of the great and deep truths of God.
- 4. For this end deep and thorough discipline is requisite. Fiery tribulations are often the means employed by God to rouse up the intelligence and quicken its search for truth into an earnestness almost like agony.

So are all the other faculties of our whole mental and moral being. They all need discipline. Made originally right and tuned to mutual harmony, it has been the constant work of sin and Satan to wrench them out of place and order, and fill them with the dissonance of hell. God must put the whole instrument in tune. Every string, every wire, every tube, must be set right, till under His master hand it shall pour forth the music of

heaven. How beautiful the process! Yet sometimes how mysterious! The result will fill heaven with melody, and make the chastened saints more than thankful for all the pain of the needful process.

Thus is God perfecting the character and developing the whole being to fit the soul for heaven. Thus through much tribulation He develops faith. He shuts the Christian up in a strait place where he can find none else to trust but God.

Thus too He develops the patience of the saints. See that dear child of God on a sick bed. Days and nights of weariness are allotted; why? Perhaps only to cultivate and develop the grace of patience. There may be nothing else lacking to put that soul into complete tune for the harmony of heaven; and now when this last wire is fitted, when this last tube in the great organ is properly adjusted, He will say -- "Now take it home. It will do for the choir above."

- 5. So God disciplines His saints here for usefulness hereafter. He has work for them to do there. Only Himself knows just what it is, and just what training is requisite for its successful prosecution. Then let us leave Him to go on in this school of training us for a service which lies open before His eye but not before ours.

Again, it is most manifest that Christ is preparing the saints to be glorified with Himself. He passed through this same school of discipline to His work and reward on high; so He asks us to follow Him in His tribulations that we may be ripened for the same final glory. Having Himself suffered being tempted and tried amid tribulations, He knows how to sympathize with those who are struggling along the same pathway. Who would not follow cheerfully such a Leader! Especially while cheered by such sympathy, and conducted onward to such a weight of glory!

Once more; the unbelief of Christians is the real occasion of very many of their trials. The Lord in mercy sets Himself to cure this unbelief; and for this purpose employs the two-fold agency of external providences and the internal work of His Spirit. Providences from without press, and the Spirit within constrains us towards God. Oppressed with trials, we must seek God and believe His word and promises; drawn by His Spirit, we renounce our unbelief and dare to trust our own Father.

Thus the Lord makes His providence and His Spirit conspire together to expel the Christian's unbelief and beget faith.

It is indeed a most interesting consideration that nothing can occur in the universe which does not tend towards this same result. "All things work together for good to those that love God." All the latitude given to external temptations is allowed and still controlled with reference to this very end. With every temptation, God will provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear it; and having borne it victoriously, we learn to trust God more than ever. Thus every temptation through grace may serve to dispel unbelief, quicken faith, and ripen the Christian for future usefulness and final glory.

REMARKS.

1. The true picture of the Christian life is very seldom presented. Almost all Christians are prone to take partial, one-sided views of the Christian life; a fact which seems often to result from dwelling too exclusively on one particular aspect of practical religion. By consequence we fail to represent it accurately as a whole, and false impressions are given.

Thus, the Christian life is sometimes represented as almost wholly a state of bondage to sin. You are made to see the Christian daily groaning under a body of sin from which no deliverance comes or is hoped to come till death. You cannot help inferring that his state is one of the most pitiable forms of slavery the world every saw -- with no emancipation possible in the present life. Now this is a great perversion of the real truth.

Or again, the Christian life is represented to be a bed of flowers, with no toil, no ruffling anxiety, no strife within or without. This too is an extreme and one-sided view of the case. The fact is that the Christian life is a checkered, varied scene -- a storm and then a calm, a rugged mountain pass, and then a verdant valley -- the light and joy of hope and of victory, succeeded often by fell conflicts with Satan or with lusts, forming the dark shades of the picture.

So the Bible sketches the Christian life; so all experience and observation testify; so therefore it should be represented.

2. In consequence of these defective representations, real Christians and especially young converts are often greatly stumbled. Not finding religion to be what they expected, their confidence is shaken. If they have been told that all will be joy, light, quietude, with no sorrows, struggle, toil, they will be greatly discouraged when they find the fact to be otherwise. Hence a strong temptation to let go their confidence and apostatize from God.

It would be of vast service to every young convert, and indeed to every Christian to understand the relation of all these trials to their own spiritual improvement. Every Christian needs to know that these are the wisest means which God can use for molding, chastening, and purifying his own heart for the work of faith here and the bliss of heaven hereafter. Then no one need be stumbled. All would love to see a Father's hand both wise and kind, in every form of tribulation.

3. These tribulations are not arbitrary or accidental. This is a great and a most injurious mistake. They always come from God, directly caused or at least permitted for some wise and good end. Nothing can come by chance.

Nothing can befall the children of God which is not suffered by God for their good. Whatever it be, God means it as an instrument for their greater sanctification and higher usefulness.

Hence it follows that God is just as good to His people in the afflictions He sends, as in those things which we are pleased to call mercies. They are all mercies. The only difference among them is that the one class seem for the present to be not joyous but grievous, though afterwards they yield the same peaceable fruits of righteousness. The other class may be a less unpleasant medicine. All alike

tend to health, and God is just as benevolent in giving the bitter portion as the sweet.

Our experience meetings on Friday afternoons are exceedingly rich and instructive. In one of these meetings a few days since, a brother rose and said, "Rejoice, my friends, with me, for God has been peculiarly good to me of late." I wanted to reply at once, "Brother, you are mistaken -- it is not merely of late that God has been good to you; He has always been as good to you as he could be; always doing the very best thing He could do, and the pleasantest thing for your present enjoyment that the nature of your case would admit. Think not that God is fitful, capricious, -- benevolent only now and then; peculiarly good by turns; no mistake can be greater than this."

You think perhaps that God is sometimes particularly attentive to your case and to your welfare. No so; He is always attentive to you, as much so as if you were the only Christian who needed His care in the whole universe, and the benevolent sympathy and regards of the Deity were all concentrated upon yourself.

It is like the case of that fond mother who has only one child in the world -- a darling son. See how she watches over him day and night; she joins him in his little plays and keeps her eye out against all harm; she kisses away his little pains; if he is sick, O, how she watches over his pale frame. But God watches over every one of His children with an eye as fixed, with love as strong, with assiduity as unwearied as the fondest mother ever had -- nay with love infinitely surpassing that of the best of mothers.

Christian mother, God gave you one only son. It was a precious gift, and you thanked the Giver for His love. You watched over that dear boy with the buoyancy of hope till he could run about his play alone; and what then? Oh, you say, he seemed well -- till one morning he was sick. His little hand was hot, his cheek flushed; he rolled his wild eye in agony. Ah me, I saw him die -- and die too in so much suffering that I almost felt relief when his little bosom heaved for the last time. And do you suppose, afflicted mother, that God was any less good in taking away than in giving your dear boy? Nay, God has no fitful spasms of goodness; all alike is infinite love -- the best thing for you that He can possibly do.

But the Lord hid His face from you, did He? But even then, He did not forsake His throne of love, nor revoke His promises, nor dismiss our great Advocate; so you might still have a God to seek and find. Nay, Christian, in those seasons of your bitterest agony, your Father was none the less kind and sympathizing. He chastens only for your "profit;" and not from His caprice. You will then (will you not?) learn to praise Him for both -- for the affliction and the gift. O you must learn this, else the law of gratitude cannot be written deeply on your very soul. You cannot praise God as you ought till you learn to praise Him for every thing and see His own kind hand in afflictions not less than in His gifts of providence. "In every thing give thanks," is the inspired precept.

Delighting in the Lord

Lecture XI
July 2, 1845

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Ps. 37:4: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

In speaking from these words I shall,

I. Show what is implied in delighting ourselves in the Lord.

II. What is implied in the promise "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

III. Why this promise is thus conditioned.

I. What is implied in delighting ourselves in the Lord.

- 1. Supreme sympathy with him. No one can properly be said to delight himself in the Lord any farther than he sympathizes with God, in respect to the great end on which His heart is set, and in the means by which he is attempting to accomplish that end. He must adopt his principles, enter into his views and feelings, and be able to respond a hearty amen, to all the announcements of his word, to all the dispensations of his providence, to his character, works, and ways. One who has this supreme sympathy with God, and who deeply interests himself in God's character, government, policy, ends and means, will of course delight himself in the Lord; and no one else will.
- 2. Delighting ourselves in the Lord implies a supreme complacency in him. Complacency in God, is benevolence or good will toward him, modified by a consideration of his character and relations. This always implies delight. Complacency is often spoken of as if it consisted altogether in a delight existing in the sensibility of the soul. But properly speaking it is not so. Complacency considered as a virtue, belongs to the will or heart. But it always implies a corresponding state of the sensibility; and of course, implies a delight or pleasure in view of the character, government, relations, works, and ways of God. Without this complacency of heart in God, we cannot be said truly to delight ourselves in him.
- 3. Delight in the Lord implies that he is chosen as the supreme good of the soul. The text undoubtedly implies this. It is setting our supreme affections on him, and choosing him as our all-satisfying portion, making him the great center in which the affections and sympathy of our soul delight to rest.
- 4. Delight in God implies universal confidence in him. We could never be said truly to delight ourselves in God, unless we had supreme, universal confidence in his character, in his

providences, and in his word. Nothing could be chosen by us as an all-satisfying portion, unless the mind regarded it as infinite and perfect. The mind is so constituted that it cannot be satisfied with any thing else. The mind is naturally and necessarily dissatisfied in a greater or less degree with whatever is seen to be imperfect. Delight in God implies, that the mind regards him as possessing infinite fulness and perfection, truthfulness, and every attribute and perfection that can fill and satisfy the soul. It is common for men to seek what they suppose will make them happy, and to endeavor to find happiness in the creature. But after all, nothing but the infinitely perfect Creator can satisfy the wants and demands of the soul. And to delight ourselves in the Lord, in the sense of the text, implies that we are satisfied in God; that his fulness and perfection meet all the demands of our being; that in him we have enough; and that the mind regards him as an exceeding great reward, as a portion infinitely ample, satisfying, full and overflowing, infinitely glorious and eternal.

- 5. Delight in God implies universal submission of our will to his. The soul that is not entirely submissive to God, cannot be delighted in him. He is like a child whose will is not subdued to the will of his parent; he is restive under the divine government, often made unhappy by the dispensations of his providence and by the requirements of his Word. To have true delight in God implies that we have no will of our own--only that the will of God should be done. It implies that the soul has come practically to regard God as infinitely wise and good, to feel the fullest satisfaction with his appointments and his dispensations whatever they may be.
- 6. Delight in God implies a spirit of universal obedience to him; a state of mind that inquires after what God would have us do with a fixed intention to do all his will without hesitation; and to devote ourselves entirely to pleasing him. It implies in short, that our whole being is given up to it; that we have no purpose or design, but in all things, at all times, in all places, and forever, to live wholly to him.
- 7. Delight in God implies delight in obeying him, or delight in his service. It is one thing to obey, and another thing to have delight in obedience. To be sure our nature is such that true obedience always produces delight. But obedience and delight are not the same thing. Where the true spirit of obedience exists, we shall find our delight and happiness of course in the service of God. We are always delighted with the course on which our heart is supremely set. When, therefore our hearts are given up to pleasing God, and we live to this end, when we are heartily and universally consecrated to God's glory and interests, nothing will of course afford us so great pleasure, we shall be so delighted in nothing else, as in waiting on God, doing his bidding, and in every thing engaging in his service. The service of God will be our meat and drink. We shall know what Christ meant when he said "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me." "I delight to do thy will, O my God."
- 8. Delight in God implies, a deep interest in his honor and glory. Everything we do and say will have reference to God. God will be the supreme end of all we say and do. In this we shall sympathize with God himself. God has a supreme regard to his own interest and glory, and is the chief end of all his works. This is by no means selfishness in God. It is not because it is his own glory, but because it is infinitely the greatest good, that he has a supreme regard to it. God's well-being is of infinitely more value than the aggregate of the well-being of all creatures that

ever were or could be made. God's well-being is infinite. Whereas the well-being of all creatures will always be finite. Nothing can be infinite that is not eternally and necessarily so. Nothing finite can ever grow and increase until it becomes infinite. Therefore the aggregate well-being of all finite creatures, must always be finite and of course infinitely less than the well-being of God. Now if God would regard things according to their relative value he must of necessity lay infinitely more stress upon his own happiness and glory than upon the happiness and glory of all other beings together. There is no comparison between the finite and the infinite, and therefore the aggregate value of the endless happiness of all creatures is absolutely as nothing when put into the scale against the well-being of God. God so regards this; and it is reasonable and right and infinitely important that he should. Consequently himself, his own glory, and his well-being, are the supreme end of all his works. When I saw this fact announced in Pres. Edwards' writings many years since, I did not at once perceive its truthfulness. And I have often since heard persons speak as if they were stumbled by such announcements as if it implied selfishness in God. Now selfishness is preferring our own interests to our neighbors, simply because it is our own. It is not selfish in us to prefer our happiness to the happiness of a goose, because ours is really more valuable. But it is selfish in us to prefer our happiness to our neighbor's, when his is equally valuable with our own. I repeat it again; it is not because the happiness or glory is God's that his heart is set supremely on it, but because of its intrinsic value, because it is so infinitely the greater good. Now delight in God implies that we regard this as he does, so far as we understand it; that we sympathize with him in this; that we regard his interests as the supreme and infinite good, and delight ourselves in promoting his glory and honor in the universe; that we find our supreme happiness and satisfaction of soul in this.

- 9. Delight in God implies that we supremely seek and desire eternal union and communion with him, that so far as our own happiness is concerned, this is all we ask, to have eternal union and communion with the ever blessed God;--that, give us this and we could lack nothing essential to our happiness; but deprive us of this, and nothing in the universe could satisfy us.

II. What is implied in the promise "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

The promise implies that we shall have those things on which we set our affections, or in other words that our desire, our really cherished desires shall be gratified. If we delight ourselves in the Lord we shall have all things on which we set our hearts. "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart"--here is no limit, but it is plainly implied that what we set our hearts on, and that which we pray for shall be granted. It seems to me that the text is to be understood, not that every transient desire or awaking of appetite shall be gratified, but that the supreme desire of the soul, that on which we can properly be said to fix our affections and our heart shall infallibly be granted to us.

III. Why this promise is thus conditioned.

- 1. Because without this condition the promise would be unsafe to the universe. For God to promise unqualifiedly to give us the desire of our heart, unless he knew that we had a complete sympathy with him, would be unreasonable, unsafe, and what he could not innocently do. What would it amount to for him to make such a promise without this condition? Why to this--that our selfish desires should be granted. But when selfishness is slain, when our supreme desire is

on God, and our whole soul sympathizes deeply with him, it is plain that our desires may be granted. It is then both consistent with the will of God, and with the highest good of being to grant our desires. God is then the great end and center of the desires of the soul, and in giving himself to the soul, he gratifies its desires.

- 2. God could not safely make such a promise but on this condition; because it would be impossible to fulfill it. Suppose he should make the unqualified promise to every individual that he should have the desires of his heart. With the endless lustings of men after objects around them, how often would it come to pass that different persons would desire the same things, when but one could possess them.
- 3. It is perfectly safe for God to make such a promise on the condition of delighting ourselves in the Lord, because whosoever delights himself in the Lord can never desire anything inconsistent with the will of God. The Spirit of God dwells in him; all his affections and desires are under the influence of the Spirit of God. And while he delights himself in God, he is sure not to set his heart on any thing unless he is drawn to it by the Spirit of God. In this case certainly he cannot at the same time be lusting after a forbidden object and delighting himself in the Lord.
- 4. This promise is thus conditioned, because God delights to bestow that on which the heart is set that delights in him. He loves to bestow himself, to communicate of his own fulness to those who set their hearts on him. He loves those that love him. There is a sense to be sure in which God loves his enemies; but his love to them is not a delight in their persons or characters. But he greatly enjoys the communication of himself to those who delight themselves in him. He loves to draw them into a participation of his joy, that they may drink of the river of his pleasure. He delights in making them partakers of his own divine nature, of his own holiness and of his own happiness.
- 5. It is of the highest importance to the universe that God should grant the desires of the heart which delights itself in him. It is for the highest good of being that he should do so. It is for his glory; it contributes to the stability of his government. It is not only highly honorable to God, but highly useful to his creatures to know that God will grant the desire of those who set their heart on him.

REMARKS.

1. Those who delight themselves in God, will of course manifest great cheerfulness of mind.

(1.) Because this delight in God is of itself a cheerful state of mind, and

(2.) Because they have the desires of the heart.

An unsatisfied craving of mind, that produces unhappiness, gloom, despondency, and despair, is not the portion of the mind that delights itself in God. The soul that delights itself in God, is pleased with whatever comes to pass. It has no way or will of its own, and therefore cannot be disappointed. It has no craving or lusting of a selfish nature, and therefore is not made unhappy by being crossed, and

denied things on which its affections are set, because its affections are set on nothing but God. While it delights itself in God it is of course cheerful and happy under all circumstances, and can rejoice evermore, and pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks.

2. From what has been said, we may see why so few prayers prevail with God. The fact is, there is so much dissatisfaction with God and so much lusting after other things, that God cannot fulfill the desires of such souls; it would be infinitely unwise and unsafe to do so. Then, as a condition of prevailing prayer, we must delight ourselves in the Lord, and when we do this our prayers will be dictated by God's Spirit, and of course will be answered.

Now look around over the world. How few seem to have their supreme delight in God. How few are seeking communion and fellowship with God. How few make union with God the supreme end of their lives. It is not strange then that our prayers are not answered. The conditions of prevailing prayer are not fulfilled. Many pray because they are pressed up to it by conviction, not because their soul pants after communion with God, and delights itself in God. Instead of loving to dwell in the Bible, and in the house of God, and in the closet--in short, instead of delighting itself in God, it is constantly roving about here and there, to see if it cannot find some good. "Who will show us any good?" seems to be its constant inquiry. Now those who are in this state cannot have their desires granted.

The reason why so many desires are ungratified, is, because they are not the right kind of desires. The truth is, where an individual delights himself in the Lord, he will have the desires of his heart. Instead of being wretched all the time, and setting his heart on some thing he cannot get, when he comes to delight himself in the Lord, all this scrambling and lusting after what is beyond his reach, will be gone; he will be like a weaned child, all peace. When the mind has God, it has enough.

Much prayer, or that which is called prayer, is after all, nothing but lusting in the Bible sense of the term. It is a craving of the mind after some selfish good. Much prayer is nothing else but the pouring out of these cravings of the selfish heart. The Apostle James speaks of this state of mind; "Ye lust, says he, and have not; ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts."

3. When there is delight in God, the supreme desire of course, will be for union and communion with God. This will be the all-absorbing desire of the mind. It will, as it were, swallow up all other desires. I will explain a little. We often see one state of mind or desire that comes to swallow up all others. The mind becomes so engrossed with one object of desire as to care for little else besides. We see this state of mind often in this world. One desire seems to eat up and swallow up all the rest. We see this too sometimes in the case of individuals that are very wicked. The drunkard's appetite for strong drink sometimes, will kill and completely destroy every other appetite; even natural affection seems to be annihilated by it. Sometimes a husband's affection for his wife is so strong, that he cares for almost nothing else. If the object of his affection is lost, he says, "what have I more? I have nothing to care for now." His interest in every thing else is destroyed. Now let this illustrate what I mean here. When the mind becomes acquainted with God and the sensibility is rightly developed towards him, as it always must be before it can be at rest, and all the desires center in God, he comes to be the supreme end of the soul in such a sense, that take any thing that you will, and leave his God, and you cannot

affect his happiness; this one desire so swallows up all the rest. With such a soul, nothing else weighs a straw in comparison to the love of God. Christ was so swallowed up at one time with this one great idea, that when it was told him saying, "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee;" He replied, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my mother, and sister and brother." He meant to rebuke the idea that our blood relatives are to be considered so much dearer than our spiritual relatives. He would say to those who sustain this relation to God, "Ye are my mother and my brethren." Now whoever has his sensibility much developed towards God, comes to feel that every thing must sustain some relation to this end, or it is of no value. Nothing else pleases. It must bear a relation to God, to his government, and to his glory, to make it of any regard to such a mind. The thing nearest and dearest to men naturally, if it does not sustain this relation, will be cast off as of no value. Said an individual some time since to another, "I am praying that the Lord would destroy your influence." "Well," remarked the other, "I hope the Lord will answer your prayers, if my influence is not good; for it is of no use to me unless it can glorify God, and if it does no good, I hope it will be destroyed." Now I suppose that individual answered just as he felt. He felt that his influence was worth nothing. Unless it would do some good to the universe, he cared nothing about it. Now when an individual comes into this state of mind, he regards every thing in this light. I must be valuable to God or he cares nothing about it.

We oftentimes see persons so much attached to others in this world as to seem really to enjoy nothing only as it sustains some relation to the object of their affection. Husbands and wives sometimes sustain this relation so that every thing is valued or not valued according to the relation it sustains to the one or the other. Now I suppose the mind becomes so completely swallowed up in God, so "sick in love," and so ravished with the love of God, and comes to take such delight in him as to say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, O God." The Psalmist knew what he said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee!" His father and mother, and many whom he had greatly loved, had gone to heaven, but still he exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" His children, and those to whom he was greatly attached, were all around him, and yet when he comes to think of God, his whole soul cries out, "There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Now this will be the case with a mind that is so ravished, so carried away with the love of God. There is such a dying of the mind to all other things, to self, to the world, to friends, to every thing, that the individual comes to care for nothing, not even to take his food, unless for the glory of God. He is dead to all but God. How safe it is, then, for God, to make such a promise as this, to an individual who thus delights himself in God!

4. An individual who delights himself in the Lord, will postpone every thing that comes in competition with communion with God. You will not find him making excuses for not attending prayer meetings, for not spending time in his closet, and holding much communion with God. You see persons who seem to be really honest, in saying they would like to commune with God, they would like to attend the prayer meeting, but they have worked very hard to day, or they have so much to do, or there is some good excuse, and they cannot attend. Now I have learned that when persons come really to delight themselves in the Lord, that such excuses don't appear to be really important. Show me a man whose soul is panting after God, who can say with the Psalmist, "As the hart panteth after the water-brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," such a man will love to go where he can have communion with God. He will as naturally postpone every thing else that interferes with his

communion with God, as he draws his breath. The truth is, when persons make such excuses about reading their Bible and attending meetings, the secret is, they have lost their keen relish for communion with God, and are beginning to lose their delight in him.

5. If we delight ourselves in God, he will delight himself in us; and he will delight himself in us just in proportion as we delight ourselves in him. As we seek communion with him, so will he seek communion with us. God loves society--the society of the holy. If we embrace him, he will embrace us. If we pant after him, he will pant after us. If we are drawn to him, he will be drawn to us. This is a law of mind. It is impossible that he should not delight in the soul that delights in him; impossible that he should not seek after the soul that seeks after him. It would be the same thing as denying himself, not to delight in those that delight in him. Whenever a mind seeks union with God, God sets his heart on that soul. It is as dear to him as the apple of his eye. He loves it as he loves his own soul. Why should he not? It is like him; it is a part of himself; it is, so to speak, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. It has come to be assimilated to his own nature. He comes to love it as he loves the man Christ Jesus, and for the same reason. And he will no more turn from it and not hear it than he would turn from his own beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

Now we ought to understand this, that whenever we find ourselves strongly drawn to God, God is infinitely drawn towards us; when our heart is panting after God, he is panting after us. More! it is God panting after us, that draws us towards him! This should be understood. It is of great importance that we should get this thing fixed in our mind, that when our mind is tending towards God, he is tending towards us. "Draw nigh to me," says God, "and I will draw nigh to you, Turn unto me, and I will turn unto you." Love me, and I will love you.

6. The soul that delights in God, will greatly mourn, if for any reason, communion is withheld. Those will be days of mourning to that soul, when, for any reason God withholds the light of his countenance. It is impossible for him, then, to be cheerful and happy. He may have confidence, and say with David, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Now in this case the Psalmist had confidence in God, but he mourned. In such a case, the soul is ready to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

I have thought many times that there was not so much mystery in what Christ said, at the time, as many would make us believe. The Christian, that knows what it is to commune and walk with God, and to have God withdraw his countenance from him, will naturally use this same language. And he will cry out with the Psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? doth his promise fail forever more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" It is not strange that Christ should cry out, as he did. God's countenance was withdrawn from him, and he could not help crying out to God to know why this was so.

Where an individual has come to delight himself in God, and falls into this state of mind in which he mourns, his mourning will be very submissive and very peculiar. It will be nothing like the mourning of this world. Not a rebellious, complaining state of mind; it will be the mourning of a "weaned child," very submissive,--a peculiar kind of mourning, and a peculiar kind of submission. It is not

rebellious nor complaining, and yet it is not joyful. It is not distrustful. "Hope thou in God," is its language, "for I shall yet praise him." It expects good from God. "I shall rejoice! Yes, for my Father will not always hide his face from me."

When these seasons last long, they head the soul into such a state, and so show the individual to himself, that he is filled with such deep grief, and is led to utter such unearthly, heart-rending groans, and at the same time has such an expression of holy submission, such a child-like dependence on God and confidence and hope in him,--O if the sinner could only hear him, could listen to such an individual when he supposed none but God near, he would go away and say, "Now I know, as I exist, I know there is such a thing as communion with God. O such expressions! such language! I know God was there!"

When I was an impenitent sinner, I had been out to attend to some law business. Returning and passing by a school-house, I heard a man praying. That prayer did more to impress my mind with the subject of religion, than all I had heard before, from my birth. I have not the least doubt but that such a prayer would affect almost any man of reflection, could he hear it. The man did not know that any one could hear him. He had left his work in the field, and had retired to the school-house for secret communion with God. And as I rode along, I heard him and stopped, and listened to what he said. And Oh! It set my mind on fire! That was what I had never witnessed before, It seemed as if I was brought right into the presence of God! The very tones of his voice, before I could understand what he said, seemed to come down upon me, like the voice of God from heaven. Every word he spoke seemed to come right from the bottom of his heart. His voice was frequently choked with groans, and sighs. It was the voice of a man pleading with God!

When an individual is in this state of mind I am speaking of, when he has fallen into darkness from any reason whatever, although he mourns, he will not betake himself to any other source of happiness. He has gone too far in this way, to go anywhere else for happiness. When a person has but little grace, he will sometimes betake himself to other objects, run into company, and go here and there, trying this thing and that, to get happiness; but when one has come to delight himself in God, and the supreme desire of his soul has centered in God--now let him fall into such circumstances as I have mentioned, and he will not betake himself to such and such places and scenes, to make himself happy! No. Indeed he will not. He will say, "O God, I cannot, I will not go anywhere else for happiness. O God, thou hast taught me to love thee; thou hast weaned my soul from everything else, so that I cannot love anything but thee, and now, wilt thou take thyself, thou who are my all, from me? O my God, I will find my joy in thee, or joy I will never have." Such will be the language of a soul in this state.

Hearer, do you know what this is? You will know if you will give yourself up to God, so as to be all absorbed in him, so that your whole being will be given up to God. If this is not the case with you, you need to be crucified.

7. The happiness which the soul, that delights itself in God, finds in Him, is so different from all other delight, so peculiar, it is like no other happiness in the world. All other joy is nothing at all like it. It has such a peculiarity, such purity,--there is nothing else that can compare with it. The intelligence, the heart, the sensibility, the whole being is so satisfied in God. Oh! I wish I had some unspeakable word to express this! For we need some unearthly language to express what every Christian has, when

he comes into such a state of mind with God. He is so elevated in God. He is drinking the very river of which God drinks. There is such a peculiarity, such sweetness in this, that the soul abhors all other joy. It cannot go and sip, and sip, in the polluted fountains of this world. What are they! What are they? Shall a man, who has bathed in the very atmosphere of heaven,--shall he go about to sip of the filthy cups of this world? Never! never! Only as he delights in God can he find any delight whatever. He cares for nothing else but what comes from God.

8. Be sure when you pray, that you fulfill these conditions, that you delight yourself in God.

9. He that will be content with God, and will really be satisfied with God, may have as much of God as he will. And just in proportion, as we give ourselves up to find our delight in God, just in that proportion shall we have delight in God. Go the universe over, and you will find, just in proportion as the soul gives itself up to God, just in that proportion, it finds its fullness in God. If you divide your enjoyment, how can God fill your cup? Just empty your whole heart of self and of everything else, then hold it up to God, and he will fill it with his own purity, with his own love and blessedness. Yes, you will have it filled with the ocean of God.

Having a Good Conscience

Lecture XII

September 24, 1845

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Text.--1 Pe. 3:16: "Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."

The discussion of this text will lead me,

I. To define conscience.

II. To show what is implied in having a good conscience.

III. The conditions upon which we may have a good conscience.

IV. The importance of having a good conscience.

I. What is conscience?

I answer, conscience is said by some writers to be moral consciousness; that is, consciousness as exercised on moral subjects. Consciousness in general is the mind's notice of its own existence and of its own states. In its particular reference to moral states of mind, it might be considered as moral consciousness, and this is precisely the idea which some writers attach to the term, conscience.

In the popular sense, however, the term means more than this. It includes not only the mind's notice of its own moral states, but the accompanying state of feeling. Everybody knows that when a mind whose moral sense is not utterly perverted, notices its own right moral states, there springs up a delightful feeling of approbation; and when such a mind notices its own wrong moral states, there arises a feeling of intense and agonizing disapprobation. Now, in the popular conception of conscience, these feelings of approval and disapproval are associated together with the mind's recognition of its own right and wrong states as all included under the term conscience.

II. What is implied in having a good conscience.

- 1. That it be enlightened. Some persons hold such exalted or rather such perverse views of the sufficiency of human reason that they see no need of any divinely revealed light. Another class speak of conscience as being itself the light of God in the soul, and they deem this of itself amply sufficient for the perfect guidance of the human heart and life. Now, in opposition to both of these views, it is quite plain that we need the aid of a written revelation, and the yet additional aid of the Spirit of God to give its revealed truth efficiency upon the heart.

Especially is it essential to a good conscience, that there should be in the mind a well-developed idea of the spirit of the law of God. If the mind errs on this point, or has defective views, there must of course be what is called an evil conscience. For example, suppose a man has no idea of the rule of duty, except as it respects outward conduct; he does not regard it as reaching the heart at all; then his conscience is not enlightened, and cannot be a good conscience. Its decisions must fail in a most fundamental point. It is only when the true idea of the law as a rule of duty is well developed, that a man can have a good conscience.

- 2. It is implied in a good conscience that it be quick and tender. There may be a well developed idea of law, and this one important condition of a good conscience may be present, and yet the mind may be so sluggish and apathetic in respect to its moral relations that the conscience becomes almost perfectly inefficient. There may be various moral states which the mind does not notice at all. For example, it may not notice indulgence of appetite; feelings of envy; violations of the law of love in business transactions. Now it is essential to a good conscience that it be quick to notice any and every departure from the law of love; in fact, it should notice instantaneously all our moral acts and states of mind. It should be in an active state of attention, incessantly comparing the mind's states and acts with the rule of duty--always on the alert to know whether every thing we say, do, or even think is pleasing to God.

A child may understand its parent's requirements well, and yet may be so negligent as not only to fail to do the things required, but he may fail even to notice his own negligence, and may not be really conscious that he is neglecting a most important filial duty. Now this, as every one must see, is a deplorable defective state of the moral faculties. The

conscience of such a child is utterly wrong.

The same defects of conscience are often exceedingly apparent in our relations to God. The mind may understand the law of God, and yet may be so little disposed to attend to its own moral states and compare them with that law, that the man might as well have no conscience at all. In such a state the reason performs none of the functions that belong properly to the conscience.

- 3. It is essential to a good conscience that it be persevering. I may perhaps illustrate what I mean under this head by alluding to the will. Some individuals have a great will; a will so resolute and persevering that they never give up anything they undertake. If their will is set upon any object, they never relinquish it till it is gained.

There is something extremely analogous to this in the conscience of some men. Their conscience will never rest till its demands are yielded. It persists in its work until it gains the ascendancy, and the desired change is effected.

Now it is vastly desirable that the conscience should have this quality of unyielding perseverance. When the mind becomes conscious of any particular form of sin, the conscience ought to persist in rebuking it until it be thoroughly and forever abandoned. Our conscience will do us no good if it stops short of this.

- 4. It is essential to a good conscience, that we obey its dictates. It will ultimately be weary of testifying for God if we refuse to hear and obey its voice. When its demands are long resisted and its voice unheeded, it seems to retire as it were into its inner sanctuary--cease to reiterate its unheeded remonstrances, and employ itself only in putting on record for future use all the contempt and abuse it is receiving. Its accounts will one day show that it was not dead nor sleeping. It was silently preparing for the judgment scene, and the eternal state beyond, where its claims shall be reasserted and its grievances be heard.

III. The conditions upon which we may have a good conscience.

- 1. There must be light; --a correct and thoroughly developed idea of duty. But,
- 2. There must be something more than the unaided light of the human understanding. The mind must have divine light, that light which God, and God alone can give. This light is promised to those who seek it, and all observation and experience show that without it, we seek in vain to find in any of our depraved race the true and well developed idea of moral obligation.
- 3. A third condition is indulgence. If I may use this term in this relation, I would say, you must indulge your conscience if you would give it efficiency.

It seems to be a law of all our mental and moral powers, that they must be indulged in order to be fully developed. For example, let the will be indulged, and its demands will become more and more imperative; its energy accumulates; its power is developed. On the other hand, let the will be suitably resisted, and in a proper way put down, and it

yields--a great change takes place. Some children seem to have no will. They are perfectly submissive to the will of their parents. Their own will seems to be lost in their parent's will, so that the only will they have left is to do the will of their parents.

A similar change takes place where the soul really submits to God. It ceases to have any will of its own. Its only will now is to do God's will most perfectly. Nothing else can please such a soul.

Now, God must always bring the soul into this state before He can bless. Hence we see explained the thousand measures of His providence; they have for their end the discipline of the will. They are divinely planned to subdue the will and bring it to bow in perfect submission to the will of God.

While submission and discipline have this result, indulgence has the opposite. Indulgence strengthens the will against God, and against submission to any known authority but itself.

So of the sensibility. Indulgence greatly augments its power. Sometimes the emotions, by indulgence become overpowering, and the man loses all self-control. Discipline and restraint have the opposite effect.

The same law prevails respecting the conscience. Give it the moral supremacy which it ought to have--let it have its own way, and its efficiency and energy are greatly augmented. It speaks then with solemn authority as if it were indeed a voice of God in the soul. Its rebukes inflict keener pain; its smiles shed over the soul a sweeter joy.

Hence it appears that the conscience is under the same law as all our other mental faculties. Trample it down and it seems to yield; it rebukes you with less decision and authority. Continue to resist it, and it seems almost to die; its voice is hushed; it ceases to remonstrate.

We may hence appreciate the importance of this condition of a good conscience. We must indulge it and give it its appropriate place among the powers of the soul. That place is the throne of dominion. Conscience ought to bear rule over all our powers and their entire action. Hence it should be obeyed, and its demands always treated with profound regard.

IV. We next consider the importance of having a good conscience.

- 1. It is intimated with great justice in our text that a good conscience is indispensable that we may commend ourselves to the consciences of other men. Nothing can be more true than this. To good men, especially, we never can commend ourselves, unless we have an enlightened and good conscience.
- 2. A good conscience is indispensable to self-respect. No man can really respect himself who does not keep a good conscience. It is impossible that he should. He may flatter himself in his own eyes, but genuine self-respect he never can have unless the foundation for it be laid in the

ennobling consciousness of aiming evermore to do right, according to the dictates of an enlightened conscience.

- 3. It is essential to peace of mind. That real equanimity--that well-founded peace of mind, which he may have, who always obeys a good conscience, can never be had on any other conditions. The man who violates his conscience cannot have it.
- 4. A good conscience is essential to usefulness. Without it, you can have but little influence over others. Those men whose moral sentiments are loose will practice loosely wherever their interest prompts them to do so, and will surely lose the respect of the community. This once lost, the less they say about religion the better. The less they do to urge other men to be just and holy, the better. If their life and spirit is such that whenever they say a word to recommend religion, the thought rushes into everybody's mind, "Physician, heal thyself," that man may as well hold his peace. His first business should be to heal himself. Let him first set his own conscience right and live according to its dictates; then the time may come when people will hear and regard what he says.

When Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel at Phillippi, a sooth-saying woman was employed by the devil to frustrate their efforts. She had long been imposing upon the people until her character had become perfectly odious. Of course she was a good tool for the devil to use. He sends her after the Apostles, and just when they are getting the attention and the hearts of the people, he sets her a shouting--"These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." The people are at once repelled; they will not believe the best truth in the universe coming from such a quarter; they turn away, and the Apostles seem likely to be utterly nonplused in respect to introducing the gospel there. Paul is "grieved," and turning to the woman, commands the evil spirit in the name of Christ to come out of her. Then the word of the Lord had free course.

Now what this woman said was true enough--but, Oh, to have it said by such a woman! It was enough to undo and nullify all that the best preacher of the gospel on earth could accomplish.

So every where and in regard to all cases where men of a loose and evil conscience would fain try to do good. Let a drunkard blow his putrid breath into your face and exhort you to be a Christian. He could not do a worse thing for your salvation. Let a man of known dishonesty get up in your prayer and conference meetings to speak for God, and all that love the cause of God are agonized, and all that hate it are made full easy of their consciences. Let such a man go about in your families with ever so many good things on his tongue--yet if his dishonest life gainsay his fair words, it were infinitely better he should never say a word. Often has the cause of religion ample occasion to say, Deliver me from my professed friends.

If a man has loose notions of morality on any points of practice, he will be known, and his talk in favor of religion might as well be spared. It matters little whether he speaks for religion or against it, his life is against it, and his own words in its favor can be nothing

better than a scandal.

- 5. Men who do not keep a good conscience must become odious to any good society. Such men could not be respected even in hell. Everybody knows that in a community of thieves and robbers they would be despised. Every community is constrained by the demands of self-preservation to insist upon obedience to conscience in at least some points. Hence the worst communities known to us in the universe have their moral regulations which it is utterly disreputable and even scandalous to violate. Deeply as our moral nature has been corrupted by sin, it still retains some of the outlines of its original structure. Under some circumstances it will yet abhor and condemn wrong doing.
- 6. If we do not keep a good conscience we must be odious to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves. Our state is odious in itself and it cannot appear otherwise than odious to any beings under whose observation it may come.
- 7. A man who does not keep a good conscience becomes a nuisance in society. You know there are such things as natural nuisances, as a pond or a marsh that breeds the ague, or a vessel that brings into port the yellow fever. So also there are such things as moral nuisances. The former acts injuriously upon the health--the latter upon the spirituality and piety of the people. A man of an evil conscience is a nuisance of the latter class. If our jurors could wisely take cognizance of such things they might complain of every such man as a moral nuisance to the community in which he lives.
- 8. Having a good conscience will secure the favor of God and peace of conscience. It secures these rich blessings by a law of necessity. God can never fail to bestow His smiles upon him who keeps an enlightened conscience void of offense, and surely he who maintains such a conscience will have the joy and peace of self-approbation.
- 9. Yet again he will have the respect of other men. The case may be such that he will have nothing else about him to command respect; yet even then he cannot fail to be really respected for maintaining a good conscience. You have all seen cases of this.

Such a man will of course be useful. His example is a blessing though he should never speak, or had not even the power of speech. The reputation of a good conscience will give any man such a character that what he does say will have weight. Hence he is furnished with a most valuable power of influence for doing good.

- 10. One consideration more. Maintaining a good conscience is absolutely indispensable to salvation. No man can be saved who does not mean to do right, and who does not take pains to know what is right in his own case and in all its varied circumstances. What! a man be saved without a good conscience? Then it is a vain thing that God as said--"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." What sort of a heaven is that man fitted to enter who does not keep a good conscience? How could he dwell in that city wherein shall "in no wise enter anything that worketh abomination or maketh a lie?" No; let that man lay it deeply to heart that if his conscience be not heeded--if its decisions are not obeyed, he has no possible ground for expecting to go to heaven.

REMARKS.

1. Those who have not a good conscience are not aware how they appear to others. I have not infrequently had occasion to expostulate with persons of loose conscience, and when I have told them how they were regarded in the community, they have been astounded. They had never so much as thought of this. It had never been told them, and they had not the discernment to see it themselves. Having managed to keep a pretty good opinion of themselves, they have been so blind to their own real character and have so misinterpreted its commonest developments that they have not been aware of the impressions which themselves are making upon the public mind.

Not long since I was in a community where a man lives whom I have known for many years. He is unlike any other man I ever saw. A neighbor said of him -- "He seems to have no friends. Nobody loves--nobody respects him." Now this is precisely the result which ought to have been anticipated. Anybody else but himself would anticipate it, but he did not. He seemed not aware of the state of feeling towards himself, although this feeling was so strong that people could hardly meet him in the streets without giving vent to their disesteem and even contempt. The trouble with him was, he had no conscience. He seemed incapable of appreciating the rights and interests of others if those rights or interests came at all into competition with his own.

So not infrequently some persons run so low in point of conscience that they are universally despised and yet sometimes are so stupid, or self-conceited, or blind as not to be aware of the fact. They should be pitied and often blamed too.

2. Such persons are often annoying and harassing their neighbors exceedingly. Their own selfishness seems to have blinded their own eyes so much that they can see no other selfishness but their neighbors, they never see their own, even though it may be so prominent, and so glaring as to amaze the whole neighborhood. It sometimes seems as if such persons would not scruple a moment to bring the small-pox into a neighborhood if it might in some perceptible degree subserve their own interests. The inquiry about the interests of others, either does not strike their mind at all, or if it does, it awakens not the least solicitude. What a conscience this!

Sometimes such persons will even go so far as to complain if they are not allowed to violate the most manifest principles of right and equity--as if they alone of all the world had a perfect right to trample on all other interests but their own!

It is indeed a great and sore trial to be so situated as to have much to do with men or women of this description. One needs in such a case to let patience have her perfect work. Surely there is any amount of occasion for its exercise.

There is one man who will keep unruly cattle, and let them run among his neighbors to destroy their crops. One such man is enough to chafe a whole community, and keep the body politic forever sore.

Others there are, and many others too will not pay their debts. Ministers and men not engaged in business are not apt fully to appreciate the evil of negligence in this thing. But business men feel the force of this. It is no wonder therefore that men who have much to do with commercial transactions

should have the importance of perfect promptness and punctuality in this point thoroughly developed. But ministers and perhaps students too who are preparing for the ministry are notoriously delinquent, and very often greatly to their injury. Business men will not respect them, and are often so chafed by this negligence in ministers that they are thrown quite beyond the reach of any good influence from their preaching.

It is a great calamity for students preparing for the ministry to run into debt and keep in debt as some do throughout their course of study. There is the greatest danger lest they acquire a looseness of conscience in respect to paying debts, and learn to content themselves while they are wronging and perhaps distressing, or at least chafing and harassing those to whom they are indebted.

The evil in the case of students really becomes terrible when they get into such a state of mind that having means in their hands to pay their debts they can quietly go on, and spend their money in extravagant dress, riding for pleasure, or indulging their appetites. Such young men must have made utter shipwreck of a good conscience. If they go into the ministry with such a conscience and with such habits, they cannot fail to curse the church and scandalize the gospel.

This matter of recklessness in paying debts is a sore calamity among any people. Especially when it prevails among professors of religion, it brings a grievous scandal upon the cause of God, and breaks the right arm of Zion's strength. She cannot hold up the glorious law and gospel of God as a burning and shining light so long as there rests upon her own name, the stain of daily and manifest dishonesty in business transactions. How can Christians hope to reach the consciences of ungodly men, while standing in such ill odor for looseness and perhaps rank injustice in business transactions?

Again, I remark that a virtuous community will very soon by a natural process throw off such persons as the scum of society. It is a curious process in the social action of a community, yet you may often observe its operation. As the scum in a vessel under fermentation, or as the chaff under a strong wind, so men of loose consciences seem to get loosened up on a community; they rise to its surface and soon disappear. The fact is that they see they are not respected, nor wanted there. They get chafed, restive, uneasy, and are glad to make it convenient to be off. This is the natural process of things where there is virtue enough to create a strong public sentiment in favor of right. Then those who will not yield to this sentiment will find it very inconvenient to stay.

Where there is not health enough in the community to throw off its social scum, it must be in a very bad state. Just as in the physical system, if there is not enough of the vital energy to throw off disease or poison, the man must die; so in the social state, if there is not enough of the vigor of virtue to throw off moral nuisances and moral poisons, languishing and death must ensue. Often this process of moral corruption goes on until the pernicious results become so apparent and so glaring even, that a reaction follows, and people seem frightened by the horrid consequences of vice and learn in some measure to appreciate virtue.

It is a rich luxury to have a good conscience. How mellow and glorious is the sun-light which it pours into the soul! Few only seem to know its blessedness--yet there are some who know it well. It is as you have sometimes seen the sun break forth from a cloud and all is glory before him. The universe seems to be lighted up into smiles of joy to greet his coming. Such is the atmosphere of peace and

glory in which the soul seems to bathe itself when it enjoys the luxury of a good conscience. There is in fact no apparent distinction between this and the broad sun-light of God's own presence upon the soul.

Scarcely anything will produce tears of joy more suddenly than for conscience to pour its sun-light approvingly upon the mind. When you have passed through a scene of great trial, through grace victorious, have you not found a delightful mingling of deep humiliation, and of overflowing gratitude to God that seems almost too rich a luxury of bliss for your heart to endure? You felt infinitely unworthy of such sustaining grace--you wondered how God could bestow it on such a one as you--yet was your inmost being stirred up to praise God for this grace, and you deemed it the richest joy of all, that God both deserved and would receive all, all the glory and the praise for all the good wrought in you by His Spirit and done through your being upheld by His power.

Your conscience approved of what through grace you had done, yet was there no pride--no self-gratulation; you cast yourself lower perhaps than ever at Jesus' feet to praise that grace which gave the victory.

The man who has a good conscience can be comfortable under any degree of outward reproach. Let all the world reproach him and cast out his name as vile, yet if conscience within is peaceful, all will be well. Let the men of his generation disown him--yea, let them wax hot in their rage against him and hustle him out of the world, yet may he be calm as a summer evening. What has he to fear? The deep foundations of his bliss are within--where no wrath or scorn of man can ever reach them. It is enough for him that conscience approves, and that his own infinite Father smiles upon his soul.

But right over against this, let that man have a vile conscience and he cannot have peace. Let all who know him conspire to approve and applaud him it is of no avail. Should angels from heaven mistake his character and give him honor, and devils from hell hide their faces before him in awe of his supposed virtue as if he were a bright angel, yet would his inmost being cry out and proclaim its earnest dissent against all such praise. Yet would his conscience upbraid him, and the lack of its approval, like the lack of Mordecai's homage to Haman, would be enough to poison all the joy derivable from all other honor and approbation. So vain a thing it is for any man to hope to be happy without a good conscience.

The most damning guilt of all belongs to those whose consciences are enlightened but are not quick and tender, and who do not obey its dictates. They know their duty but they do it not. With light enough to be angels in virtue they have stupidity and moral hardness enough to sink them to the rank of devils. No guilt can be so black as that of knowing the claims of God, and yet deliberately setting the mind, despite of conscience, to trample those claims under one's feet. No moral state can be worse than that of having a conscience thus abused, thus violated of its virtue so to speak, and rifled of its purity, till it ceases to persuade towards the path of life.

Are any of those impenitent sinners who hear me, going on this moment in that career of death? Sinners, beware!

Relations of Christ to the Believer

Lecture XIII
July 30, 1845

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Text.--1 Cor. 1:30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."

In speaking from this text, I shall,

I. Define briefly the terms used;

II. Show what is implied in Christ's being made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption;

III. Show how He becomes our wisdom &c. &.

IV. The conditions on our part of His assuming these relations to us.

I. Define briefly the terms used.

- 1. Wisdom is a comprehensive term often used in the scriptures to denote true religion. Perhaps no other more strictly philosophical definition of true religion can be given than this--it is wisdom;--acting wisely, in view of all known truth which is important to our welfare. All who are truly wise will of course reverence and obey God.

Some commentators have supposed that wisdom is here put first in order, that it may cover the whole ground, being a comprehensive term which may include all that pertains to human salvation. Such would read the next word, "and," even; thus--Christ is made unto us wisdom, yea, even righteousness, sanctification and redemption. All these are comprehended in his being our wisdom. Or the meaning may be according to the common interpretation--Christ imparts to us each moment the wisdom we need in daily life. As his own words--"If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally."

"Righteousness" denotes justification, acceptance with God. This is the meaning of the term as often used in the scriptures.

"Sanctification" means holiness; the being made pure from sin, and becoming holy as God is holy.

"Redemption," as a part of the scheme of salvation stands intimately connected with our being justified and sanctified. Its figure supposes us to have been slaves of sin, and to be bought off from this state of slavery by Jesus. Henceforth, we are no longer held under either the curse of the law, or the control of sin.

Thus these various terms when all employed as in our text, denote salvation from sin itself and from all its penal consequences.

We are next to consider,

II. What is implied in Christ's being made our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

- 1. It implies our own fallen and helpless state. Christ would not become our wisdom if we were wise enough of ourselves. He never would become our righteousness if we could be righteous before God without him. Nor would he be our sanctification if we were not so wholly polluted as to need divine cleansing; so hopelessly unclean that no efforts of our own either would be made, or could if made avail to transform us from utter pollution to intrinsic purity of heart. he would not have given himself for our redemption if we had not been fearfully enslaved, past the power of self-effected emancipation. Thus all just views of Christ's work serve to abase man, for they show that Christ becomes all in all to us because we are nothing and meaner than nothing in ourselves.
- 2. It is also implied that we have in him a perfect wisdom, a perfect righteousness, sanctification and redemption. If God presents us his own eternal Son as a supply for some specific want of ours, we may rest assured that the supply is perfect. The source is exhaustless. It is both adapted to meet the existing want and is amply adequate. If God should raise up to any one of us a Solon or a Solomon to be our wisdom, the supply might be valuable to the extent of their ability to teach us--but no further. If God gives us Christ, the supply must be just as perfect as Christ's own ability. So also, if Christ should give us some heavenly-minded saint, say from the upper world, to stand by us, and come into the closest relation to us which is possible for a heavenly and an earthly saint to sustain, in order that this saint might be our sanctification--then he would be worth just as much to us as he could do. His ability to effect our sanctification, would be the measure of his value to us. So of Christ. He is a perfect sanctifier, because he is able to "keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy;" because, "he gave himself for the church that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that is might be holy and without blemish." This last passage shows that this cleansing is effected by means of "the washing of water by the word;" agencies which pertain to the present state. Of course the present is the state in which the sanctifying work takes place; unless it be already effected, none can see God in heaven. So also is Christ a perfect Redeemer. All that redemption can do for enslaved and accursed man--all that is need to do, if fully done by Christ.

- 3. It is implied that this wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, provided for us in Christ are such as God can accept. If we become righteous through Christ's righteousness, God will accept us. If sanctified in this way, our sanctification will be acceptable to God. If redeemed, God endorses the redemption-act, and we are held slaves no longer. This must follow of course. The scheme of God's own providing, when legitimately received by us according to the true intent of the provision, God cannot disown and reject. God cannot accept our own righteousness, but will accept of Christ's. Our own self-made sanctification can never be worthy of his acceptance, but that wrought in us by an indwelling Christ, the Father can and will approve.
- 4. Let it not be forgotten, that God has made Christ our wisdom, righteousness and sanctification, and that Christ has accepted the office,--has undertaken the work. Of course nothing less than perfectly ample provisions are afforded for our being wise, righteous, sanctified and redeemed.

III. We next inquire how Christ is to become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

It is manifestly one thing for God to set him apart for these purposes; another thing for Christ to be willing to undertake; and yet another for him actually to become so to any individual of the race.

- 1. Not by imputation. Many have supposed, strangely enough, that Christ works out a perfect righteousness in himself, not in us, and then makes it over to us so that by imputation is becomes ours. He first becomes holy, wise and righteous himself, and then accounts this holiness, wisdom, and righteousness ours, by some process of transfer, which, however, makes it ours not by causing us to be holy, wise, or righteous, but only by causing us to be so regarded.
- This seems to be exceedingly unlike the true gospel system. The gospel scheme of salvation manifestly contemplates a real change wrought in the soul from folly to wisdom, from sin to holiness, from unrighteousness to righteousness.
- 2. Christ does become our wisdom and righteousness by uniting himself with us. It is not merely by entering into a covenant relation as some have supposed, but by entering into an actual relation of the most intimate sort; as the Bible often expresses it, by entering into us and dwelling in us, so that we are in Christ, and Christ is in us.
- 3. Having really entered into us in this spiritual union, Christ works in us by the influence of his Spirit through his truth, thus enlightening our intelligence, molding our hearts, chastening our temper, and transforming us into his own image. In the language of the Bible, he "works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is not strange that by such a union, and by means of such influences exerted upon our souls, he should become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.
- 4. Contemplating righteousness and redemption in their strictly technical meaning, Christ becomes our righteousness and redemption by presenting us to the Father as redeemed through his blood and thus made right in the eye of law, the punishment due for our sins being set aside

in consideration of Christ's having suffered enough to answer all the ends of public justice under the government of God. Consequently we appear before the great King of the universe, not as self-redeemed, but as redeemed by Christ--not as self-justified, but as justified only through the righteousness of Christ.

Again, in this spiritual union formed between Christ and the believer, Christ takes possession of our faculties and so controls them with his gracious influences that he rescues us from the power of temptation, and delivers us from the law of sin which is in our members. The Bible represents our very bodies as being emancipated from the thralldom of sin and satan. We become temples of the Holy Ghost, and so united to Christ that he says "we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones."

Such being our relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, is it any wonder that we should be accepted of the Father? It being most evident that we are thus accepted not for our sakes, but for Christ's sake; not for our righteousness but for his; nor for any thing in us which is primarily ours, but for every thing in Him.

Now however curiously we may inquire about the philosophy of our union with Christ--however we may push our inquiries to learn how one mind can dwell in and thus control another, or how the vicarious death of one being may avail for the pardon and life of another; there may still remain points about the subject to us inexplicable, and yet there should not therefore attach to them a doubt of their reality. There may be realities in the spiritual world and in the vast government of God which our short vision cannot fathom. The strong presumption is that there should be more in the universe than we can fully know to-day.

IV. We are next to consider the conditions on which Christ becomes our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

- 1. A full renunciation of ourselves. While we are trying to gain access to God and acceptance by ourselves, we are of course rejecting Christ, and he will of course reject us. It is all vain to expect success in this way. Our works and our persons will be alike rejected while we disown Christ and cleave to our own merits and righteousness. Why should it not be so? Our own works, out of Christ, are worthless; they are never right in themselves except as Christ works in us to make us do right. And as to pardon, there is nothing that we can do which approximates towards making an atonement for our sin on the ground of which God can remit the penalty of death eternal.

Whether therefore we think to merit a pardon, or to make ourselves so holy without Christ as to be accepted of God, we shall utterly fail. We must become quite empty of ourselves if we would be filled with Christ, and surely we must be filled with Christ if we would be right with God.

- 2. It is essential that we apprehend Christ as being our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and understand what is meant by these precious words. We must know in some good degree what is meant by the oft-recurring language of the Bible which represents Christ as being our Life,--Christ our Light,--Christ our All; which affirms that Christ is in us--dwells in

us and is our sanctification. Until we understand these passages intellectually, we cannot believe in Christ and receive him in these relations. Faith begins with the intelligence; hence the idea must be in some measure developed in our minds before we can put forth moral efforts to realize this state in our own experience.

- 3. There must be a hungering and thirsting after Christ--a state of mind ripe for giving up every thing that stands in the way of receiving Christ. We must be ready to renounce self altogether and put the Lord Jesus Christ on the vacant throne. Christ must take the place so long held by self.

During my ministry I have seen striking cases of persons who have groped a long time after Christ as if they were ready to embrace him if they might find him, but yet when the idea of embracing Christ came to be fully developed, and they saw what it really was, they drew suddenly back and would not embrace such a Savior on such conditions. Before, they thought themselves quite ready and anxious to get such a Savior as they supposed Christ to be; but when they saw how much self-denial and self-renunciation were implied in receiving Christ, they turned away like the young man in the gospel history--"sorrowful--for he had great possessions." How could he make up his mind to give them all away?

Thus many are very often deceived. They think themselves quite ready to receive Christ. They suppose themselves really to thirst for gospel salvation, and think that surely if they could see it and find it they are of course ready to embrace it;--but let me tell you, my own experience testifies that this does not follow of course. I know that some may be greatly anxious for relief and apparently most ready to receive it; and yet when they come to see how much self renunciation it demands, they draw back. Hence a positive readiness to welcome Christ, though at the utter sacrifice of self and of all that is dear to self, is an indispensable condition of receiving him.

- 4. If Christ is received at all by us in all these relations, it must be as a whole--a whole Savior, one who delivers us from all sin, one who demands absolute and universal self-renunciation. It must be understood that every sinful indulgence must be crucified, and Christ become all in all to our life and happiness.
- 5. The great, comprehensive condition is faith--that act of the mind which receives Christ for all that he is offered--as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. It is faith on our part which consummates this blessed union between our soul and Christ. Christ has of a long time been ready to enter into this relation to us; and now the moment the soul commits itself to him and truly yields up to receive Christ in all his relations, the thing is done: Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. It is impossible that this union of our soul with Christ should take place without faith on our part. Christ may be at hand--may reveal himself to the soul and show us what he stands ready to do for us; yet if we do not voluntarily receive him, he does not become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.
- 6. In order that Christ may become our wisdom, we must receive him for all that he is. We must

really cease to trust in our own wisdom and practically rely entirely upon his. So we must receive him as our righteousness, sanctification and redemption, taking him alone for the full supply of every want in all these respects, and utterly renouncing ourselves as at all sufficient to do of ourselves what Christ is provided to do for us.

REMARKS.

1. It may be proper to present in few words the true idea of salvation through Christ: namely, Christ living and reigning in the soul; a vital union between a living God and the very soul of the believer. This is the very thing which Christ so beautifully and forcibly illustrated by the figure of the vine and its branches. As the branch is in the vine and cannot live and be fruitful unless it be, so no more can we except we abide in Christ.
2. It is remarkable to see to what an extent the Church has lost the true idea of faith and union with Christ, and how nearly they have lost sight of that which is the very soul of the whole gospel. The Old School hold that Christ's salvation is something imputed to us; not a living union, effected by Christ's dwelling within us, but a something made and done by Christ, and reckoned ours by imputation, that is, by being so regarded.

The New School hold no such ideas, but hold simply that we are forgiven through the atonement of Christ, and then as to salvation from sin, we must work that out ourselves. Yes, some of their great leaders say, if you want to become free from sin, you must work for it. This is the very language of Dr. Chalmers in his commentary on Romans. After arguing forcibly and at length the doctrine of imputed holiness and righteousness, he asks; "How shall we get personal holiness and righteousness?" He answers, "I tell you, you must work for it."

Precisely the same answer was given by the Synod of New York and New Jersey. They maintained strenuously, that personal sanctification must be got simply by working for it; they use the very language of Dr. Chalmers.

What a development this of the fallen doctrine of the Church! Instead of receiving Christ for holiness, they put our own works in his place. Nothing is said, apparently nothing is believed concerning a living union between the soul and God, whereby a mighty transformation is wrought and fruit brought forth to God: this view seems to be entirely lost, or overlooked; imputed righteousness is made to answer for pardon, and then as for personal holiness, "you must work it out."

3. A full salvation is equally open to all, to all of every grade, of all ranks of society; a door is set wide open, and whoever will, may rise and enter. The whole of this salvation is open to each and all. When self is rejected and Christ received, you have the whole of it, nothing more remains. The rich, and the poor, the free and the bond, may have it all on these only conditions.
4. This great and full salvation may be received by any and by all, now, at this very moment. Let me ask the impenitent sinner in this house; Did you suppose when you came here this morning that it was possible for you to be as really saved and blessed to-day as the purest soul on earth is? Did you not suppose that the work was too difficult, and the time requisite for doing it so long that you must of course delay till some more convenient season; till some season less filled up with studies, business

occupations, &c? Did you suppose it possible to be fully saved from sin and death at once?

But you say, must I not work? Must I not be convicted, and thus get ready for a work of grace? Oh, sinner; you do not understand the great simplicity of the gospel system. But you must understand it, or never come to Christ at all. You think you must work much and long; but no mistake can be greater. God wants not those works of yours; he will accept of Christ, but not of your works; you might go about till doomsday to get ready, and not even approach the subject. In this way you never begin, you make not the least advance. God does not ask of you any of those works; he can receive nothing but Christ, and he offers you Christ to-day. Christ on the cross, your pardon; Christ in your soul, your sanctification; this is all, and when you accept of him in all his relations, the work is done; until you do, nothing is done at all. God will no sooner accept you out of Christ, than he would accept the Devil. He will no sooner accept at your hands one thing than another; your prayers no sooner than your curses; your reading the Bible, no sooner than your reading Tom Thumb; your going to church, than your going to a brothel--all is odious, abominable, shocking to him, only as seen in Christ. Abandon then forever the idea that you must make these preparations. All are of no use, only that you may thus use up all your own efforts and learn that you must renounce them all, utterly, and forever. Will you push your prayers and your self-righteousness into the very face of God? Will you set yourself up to merit his favor? Horrible!

"O my God, said a sister, who had long been fasting and praying and had worn herself all out; O Lord, said she, I give it all up, I leave it all; I cast it all away; Jesus is all my salvation; this is enough; I want nothing more; I put away all things but Christ; let me have Christ only, and Christ forever."

But perhaps some sinner will say; "Must I not first be converted? You are urging Christ on me before I am converted."

Sinner, what is it to begin? What is it to be converted? Conversion is the very thing I am talking about. Paul did not say to the Jailer, go and pray--go and read the Bible--do penance; but go at once and believe on Christ--believe, believe now.

So sinner, Paul says to you, now; all the things you would do before you come to Christ are of no use. You might work hard, but like the boatman in the rapids of Niagara, despite of your hard rowing you would go over the falls.

5. From what has been said, it can be easily seen why so few embrace the gospel. If this entire self-renunciation is an indispensable condition of receiving Christ, then the reception of Christ has met with two obstacles; often this condition has not been thoroughly preached and insisted on; and again, when it has been, many have stumbled upon it, and could not receive Christ on such terms.

6. The true and glorious idea of the gospel being left out, men have of course been left in bondage to sin. How could they be saved when they were not told that they must receive Christ as of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption?

7. This view of the subject presents the most adequate remedy for our necessities; the only thing that can really save our souls. Let me inquire of those in this house who have made great efforts. Did not

those efforts leave you in a yet more wretched state, except when Christ was with you, and led you to receive him alone? What did all your other efforts avail? Ho! some of you can say, I know what this fruitless toil means; I have tried it all, and got into the experience described in the 7th chapter of Romans, and there I groaned out, "O wretched man that I am;" and there I found nothing but wretchedness and fruitless struggles till I went forward and found peace, and no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

8. Hitherto the mass of the church have gone only into the 7th of Romans, and then have floundered along, plunging deep in the mire like Bunyan's pilgrim in the slough of despond, toiling, agonizing. O, what cases of agony you would find if you were to go about the churches. I can not tell you how much my soul has been agonized as I have found such multitudes, confused, confounded, agonized, crying out, "O wretched man;" and all this time supposing that this is the highest attainable state of experience in this present world, and the very state in which Paul was when he wrote the epistle. Alas, if God had really doomed the church to such a life till death comes for their relief! Alas, yet more if the Church dooms herself to such a living death, when God has provided so simple and immediate a deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord!

9. It is infinitely dangerous to mistake the true idea of the gospel. The more I see the real state of the Church, the more I am perplexed to conceive how the Church can be saved in such a state of darkness and unbelief.

10. How infinitely important that a ministry be raised up to go out and preach this true, and whole gospel; O, how much good one such minister may do! Let him go where he will, he will find not a few who are crying out in agony, O wretched man! If he can only reveal to them a living, redeeming Savior, what a work he may achieve! O, is it not time, young men, to be awake to these things? Will you not get hold of this glorious gospel yourselves, and then go out and tell the churches its glories, and its power to save? But, alas, there is a young student, yes, perhaps a theological student; he goes out and lectures; not on the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, but on Mesmerism and Phrenology! Horrible!! Instead of preaching to the churches a full salvation and leading forth her desponding sons and daughters into glorious liberty, he goes about manipulating heads and working upon the nerves of some pale invalid--Alas! I cannot tell you how much my soul has been agonized to think that there ever could be a theological student here who could do this! O let him only be full of Christ, so full of Christ that he can think and talk about nothing else, and he will lecture on something very different from Mesmerism and Phrenology. Let all these young men be filled with Christ, and this Institution can shake the world! When every student is full of this one great idea, and every Professor also; and every Christian in this church; then let it pour forth abroad like waves of light and glory over all the land. O, hast that day of salvation!

11. Many have put faith in the soul in the place of Christ in the soul. Now Christ is received by faith, but Christ in the soul, and faith in the soul, are very different things. We never should rest till our faith be such as really receives Christ into the soul; then we shall have Christ there and not faith only.

12. We may see the relation of faith to sanctification. Faith must take the lead in all truly gospel exercises. Faith receives Christ, and then Christ becomes our sanctification. Christ once received in the soul, then works in us to will and to do, develops every grace, and leads us along to the stature of

perfect men.

Let no one stumble at the mystery of Christ in the soul, achieving there the work of salvation. I have often injured my own soul by philosophizing about the work of faith; but now I have learned that Christ is my all, that Christ received within us works in us and effects all that need be wrought.

13. It is easy to see why this doctrine is regarded by many in the Church as so mysterious. It is because they still hold on to the notion of self-sanctification by faith or by works, without Christ. They are in great agony, they toil hard; and no wonder; they have not the true gospel. They are working out their salvation without Christ.

15. It is a present and universal duty to receive Christ thus. All who do not are living in sin. Whatever they may think of themselves, they are in bondage to the flesh and to Satan.

Beloved, if you live in sin, you will die in sin, and whither Christ goes, you cannot come. You are rejecting Christ, and you can have no salvation out of him. Verily there can be no salvation without receiving Christ into the soul as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Now, if this be so, what is the state of many professors of religion here? Many of you have not received Christ by a living faith--you have no rest in Christ--no rest any where. Until you find Christ, you have not found the true gospel, nor its salvation. You are living, not in Christ, but in yourself. You are not conscious of having eternal life actually in your possession. You do not realize its vital, sin-subduing, soul-purifying power. And will you rest there? Can you?

I am afraid that very many of this congregation have not the power of the gospel in them. That young man who can go out and preach nothing better than Phrenology and Mesmerism; is his soul running over with the flood tides of the gospel? Do you think that young men, if their souls were filled with the love of Christ, could go about and lecture on politics? Nay, truly; could they go out and tell people how to vote for President if their own souls were full of Christ, and they knew that many hundreds and thousands abroad in the land are stranger to the glorious gospel of a full salvation.

O, it does seem to me that we are crazy if we will not wake up to the fact that the Church knows not Christ, and that Christ must be held forth in his fullness before his gospel can become truly the power of God unto salvation to the souls of the Church.

O, I am constrained to believe that very many now here know not this glorious gospel yet! Their souls do not teem with the subject. O, how I want to see every student here, and every man and woman in this place in a blaze! Then might this Church begin to be the light of the world. Who will not pray God that his own mighty power may come down and abide upon our Zion.

The Folly of Refusing to be Saved

Lecture XIV

August 14, 1845

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Pr. 17:16: "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?"

In ordinary discourse the term "fool" is used in various senses; but generally in only one sense in the Bible. We sometimes speak of a natural fool, meaning one that is born so, or that becomes so by some injury of the brain. Sometimes persons are called fools who are deranged; and sometimes the term is applied to those who in common matters act unwisely.

Moral fools are those whose intelligence remains unimpaired, but who refuse to use it, and who give themselves up to be controlled by their sensibility and their passions as if they had no intelligence at all. This is the sense in which the Bible uses the term, fool.

It deserves special notice that this is the worst and most disgraceful sense of the term. Fools in most of the other senses of this word are not much if at all accountable; perhaps they are not moral agents at all; and hence the term as applied to them is not reproachful. We may pity them; but it were unreasonable and cruel to blame or even despise them.

But a moral fool, who has reason and will not use it, who gives himself up to his own gratification as if he had no intelligence and meant to stultify all the sense God has given him -- he is a mean man, and the term fool which the Bible applies to him is intrinsically and most justly reproachful.

The term wisdom in scripture, denotes true religion, virtue, or holiness. It implies a knowledge of things as they are, and especially some right knowledge of God, and a corresponding conformity of heart to this knowledge. It always involves these two elements; enlightened intelligence, and a systematic yielding of the heart to the control of known truth.

The meaning of our text is obvious. It asks why sinners should possess all the means of salvation, and have the opportunity of laying hold of infinite good, and yet have no heart to use it. Wherefore is it that they have so great a price lodged in their hands? Why does God give them the means to buy, when they don't want the commodity?

The text assumes that sinners really have all the requisite means of salvation--that they have no heart to lay hold of it though it be an infinite good; and that, acting thus, they are really fools. It is taken for granted that having price enough in their hands to buy infinite good and yet refusing to buy, they are fools indeed. Then the inquiry is pressed; why is this so? Why are so many facilities afforded, and no use made of them?

This naturally leads us to inquire in the first place what constitutes the price which sinners have in

their hands?

To this we answer,

- 1. God has removed the obstacles to their salvation by giving Christ to die for them. Now if they will only give themselves up to Christ and accept His atonement for their sins, there remains no need of their suffering the penalty of the law. They are indeed condemned to hell already, and most justly; but through the death of Christ, the redemption-money is put into their hands, and they may redeem themselves if they will.
- 2. God tenders to them the advocacy and mediation of Christ. It only remains that they accept it, and it is theirs -- freely, faithfully, unceasingly. God has given His own Son to mediate between sinners on the one hand, and the infinite government and throne of Jehovah on the other. Now He only asks the sinner, will you have My own Son for your prevailing advocate? I "hear Him always."
- 3. Christ Himself in all His official relations is offered to sinners. Every thing that He is appointed to do, He offers to do for them. The true Christian can say in truth, Jesus is mine, my Teacher, my Mediator, my atoning Sacrifice, my everlasting Friend, my All. Now everything that Christ can do for the soul, He offers to do for every sinner. The price is put into the sinner's hands to obtain this immeasurable good.
- 4. God offers him also the Holy Spirit. Yea, this Spirit is given, is sent to strive with even the wayward, unwilling sinner. Fain would the Spirit lead him to forsake his sins and live. The heavenly voice calls, entreats, implores; the Divine Agent throws light before his mind; awakens solemn thought; bears long with his stubbornness and folly; so that no sinner can say -- There is none to plead with me that I would turn and live, for the Spirit of God is doing this very thing.
- 5. All the promises are given the sinner. God has given you all these exceeding great and precious promises that He may encourage and incite you to lay hold of everlasting life. They cover every want you have or can have, they come down to meet you just where you are, like a golden chain let down from the eternal throne to lift you out of the horrible pit, and raise you up to heaven. O, what promises! Surely such words could come from none but God! What a price are they! They are written pledges -- the express bonds of the government of God -- government bonds, sinner, enough to insure you the infinite riches of the treasury of Jehovah, yet they are laid at your feet -- a price put into your hands to get wisdom.
- 6. God gives you all things requisite to life and godliness. All needed grace is provided and proffered you to make sure to you eternal life. Provision enough is here to meet all your need for time and for eternity. You may have the prayers of this people, their sympathies, their counsels; all the aid they can afford you in your way to heaven. You cannot imagine a thing essential to your salvation which God has not furnished you -- not one thing. On His part all is done. Nothing remains except what necessarily devolves on you to do.

There are some things essential to the salvation of the sinners which God cannot do. They

must be done by the sinner himself. God cannot repent in your stead, you must repent for yourself. Neither can God believe on Christ for you; this also you must of necessity do yourself. The Deity cannot be born again for you, so that it shall answer instead of your "making yourself a new heart and a right spirit." It is no part of the provisions of salvation to relieve you of the responsibility of these duties. Indeed it is in the nature of the case impossible that you should be saved unless your own mind consents to obey God and accedes to the whole plan of salvation. No other being in the universe can give this consent of the mind in your stead, so as to exonerate you from the responsibility of doing it yourself.

But everything that God could do, He has done. He knew the whole ground beforehand. His eye ran through the whole subject; He knew your guilt and condemnation, and consequent need of an atonement; He knew your ignorance and need of instruction; your waywardness and consequent need of guidance and quickening; your reluctance and aversion, and consequent need of mighty influences to constrain you to turn and live. Hence it is with the utmost truth that the Deity, looking over the whole case, says of you as of His ancient people, "what could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

And now in view of all that God has done to bless the sinner by putting in his hand a price of infinite value, how can we say less than this, that every sinner who has this price given him to get wisdom and will not use it, is a fool, really a fool in the worst sense of that term?

Sinner, your conduct is infinitely unreasonable. It would be wicked to call you anything else than a fool. If any one should call you anything else than a fool, he would be a liar like yourself. You can rightly bear no other name than this, No other word so perfectly expresses your real character, and so well distinguishes you from all other beings in the universe. By pre-eminence, and in distinction from all other beings, you are a fool. Yes, a fool and a liar in the worst sense of the term are you -- in the same sense in which Satan is a fool and a liar. Did I say, in the same sense in which Satan is a fool? I take that back. The devil has no price put into his hands to get wisdom. Who knows that if he had, he would play the fool with it as you do? Go bear this price to hell, and then put it in the hands of Satan and his angels, and see if they will scorn it as you do. Let them have Bible societies there, and the glorious effusions of the Holy Spirit, and let the tidings ring through all the deep caverns of hell -- "Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Who knows that they would hear with cold indifference, and spurn with proud contempt as some of you do? We are too fast then, in saying that Satan and his legions are as wicked fools as those ungodly sinners who will not have salvation. We should not condemn them before they are proved guilty. Put on trial, they might show vastly more wisdom than you do. It is by no means improbable that you are greater fools than they. We do not know that they would not reject the offer of eternal life. True they once played the fool when they broke away from their rightful allegiance to God. They did then just what you did when you began to sin; but no offers of mercy ever fell upon

their ears. Who knows that they would have been so great fools as to have trampled Mercy underneath their feet? Surely they have never evinced that superlative folly which characterizes the sinner who will not have a redemption which costs him nothing but which cost the Son of God a cruel death.

But let us enter into some particulars which show the infinite folly and unreasonableness of the sinner's course.

- 1. Sinners prefer their own gratification to the happiness of God and of the universe. They had rather please themselves than please God, though they know that God's pleasure is perfectly right and perfectly vital to the happiness of the universe. O, what infinite folly to be willing to see the well-being of the universe put in jeopardy, or even sacrificed, to secure their own selfish gratification!

What should you think of a man who should see a city taking fire and know that by an effort he might extinguish the fire and save the city; but prefers some slight gratification, and sees it burn down. He had rather read a novel, or finish his dinner, or play with a whistle, any such paltry gratification he places before the saving of a city from devouring fire! O, you would cry out, What a contemptible fool! What a wicked fool, and a wretch! O, you would cry -- what! would he stop to read his novel, or finish his dinner, or jingle a rattle-box, and give this mean gratification the preference over the salvation of a city from fire! What a fool!

We do not call the fowls of the air or the beasts of the field fools, for they know no better; but the beings whom God has given intelligence and who then make themselves like brutes, should be called fools in the worst sense of that term.

- 2. Sinners are fools because they give time the preference over eternity. These little interests that can endure but for a moment, they value more than those momentous interests that must endure through ceaseless ages. Just think of this! They not only hazard, but cast away eternal interests for those which are transient as a dream. If this is not folly, what can be?
- 3. Sinners prefer their own present gratification to eternal happiness with God. God promises them His own infinite smiles of love and favor; they of their own accord forfeit this blessedness every day they live for the sake of the pitiful pleasures of sin. What infinite folly is this!
- 4. Sinners are fools because they really care more for men than for God; care more for the good opinion of men than of God; are more afraid of offending men than God; care more to be loved by men than to be loved by God, and would sooner please man than God. All this you know is the fact. Some of you are conscious that it is your state of mind this very moment. You can all look back to the time when you practically acted and really felt as I have just described. You thought a thousand fold more of men than of God. Was there ever greater folly than this in hell?

How do you suppose that angels must regard this? What can be more wonderful to them than such folly in beings whom God has made capable of wisdom? What can astonish and amaze them more than to see how men treat God? How they must feel to see men

treat their Infinite Father with absolutely no respect whatever -- with not a thousandth part so much respect as they show to most of their fellow mortals! O, they never saw God so abused and insulted in their worlds of light and love! O, they cry out -- why does God bear with such outrageous insult? Why does He let any sinner breathe His air or see His sun light another moment?

And if they wonder that God should bear with the sinner's folly, surely they cannot any the less wonder that sinners should be such fools. O, they say, why will those sinners lose heaven and go down to hell for absolutely no good reason whatever -- nay, when every imaginable reason urges them to win eternal bliss and shun eternal woe?

- 5. Sinners show their folly inasmuch as they care more for their bodies than they do for their souls. What hosts there are over all the land who really care more for dress than they do for heaven; or more for the low forms of sensual gratification than for the noble enjoyments of benevolent affections. O what folly to put the body before the soul! And what is that body, sinner, for which you care so much? Pray what is it made of, and what is it? Made of the same matter which last year was gathered in from your wheat field -- the same which a little farther back was carted out from the dung-hill; -- now you are strutting about with a portion of this same substance in your body; and you are proud of it, and value it more than your immortal soul! And where may this choice body of yours be when another summer shall have come and gone? Where? There is a place for it on yonder hill, and there are worms there to consume it. Ah, sinner, is this worth more to you than the soul that never dies?

Your soul -- what is it? A spark of God -- a living, thinking agent, made like it's Author to exist onward, and still onward through everlasting ages. In its essential nature as intelligent, and moral, it is made like God. Like God, your soul must exist eternally, reaping forever the fruits of seed sown in these passing years of your existence.

And yet this soul you value less than that earthly body! You would think a man mad if he should pay more attention to his shoes than to his feet -- if he should value the cloth he wears more than the body that wears it! Yet your folly is greater far than this.

- 6. The sinner's folly is apparent also in this; he prizes other books more than the Bible. He reads other authors much; the Bible little, or perhaps none at all.

What strange conduct is this. Consider, of what does the Bible treat? Is it merely of history, or of philosophy, or is it to be valued merely for its poetry? No, no; it is far more than this; it is a guide from earth to heaven -- rather a guide from the way of hell to the way of heaven; it leads away from the doom of the lost to the joys of the blest. It puts into your hands a pearl of great price. O how precious! But in its place you put Byron and Shakespeare -- and what next? Perhaps Tom Thumb or Don Quixote -- nothing can be so mean or so frivolous that you will not prefer it before the glorious word of God.

Some of you probably know so little about the Bible that you would not know whether the preacher had quoted from the Bible or the Koran! Shame on such ignorance of such a book as the Bible! Let me ask these young men and young women; how much have you

read in your Bible the past year? Is it so much that you are advancing in that knowledge of God which it reveals? Are you sure that you have made some fresh accessions to your knowledge of the Bible during the past week? Suppose your Bible could speak and were called on to testify how much you had read in it; what sort of testimony would it bear? If that Bible could also testify how much you have neglected its pages and how much you have read other books of far less importance; if it could testify also to the small interest you have felt when you seemed to be reading its sacred lines and to your great interest, when you have read other pages inspired with far other spirits; what a testimony would be borne! How full of condemnation to your soul! Let this come home to every heart.

- 7. The sinner's madness appears also in this; they postpone the one thing needful for almost any trifling matter. Religion is put off and made to give way to every thing else. One man pleads that he must pay his debts first; another must get his lessons first, or perhaps get through college first; and then, after all the more important things are done, he will attend to religion. Thus in practice religion is made the last of all things, and in time of being attended to it comes last of all. In theory, however, these same men will admit and even maintain that it should be first of all.

Now there can be no greater or surer mark of folly than to pursue a course directly the opposite of what we know to be right. This every sinner is doing.

You cannot conceive a more desperate folly in the universe than that of the sinner who has such a price put into his hands to get wisdom but who has no heart to improve it. Do you suppose there was ever heard of in the whole universe anything so shocking, so monstrous, so absurd, so foolish, so hateful, so devilish -- devilish did I say? -- so much worse than devilish, as this folly of the sinner who might buy heaven, but chooses to throw away his price and go to hell! O, this is the perfection of folly! Surely nothing in the line of folly can outdo this!

But we must pass now to answer the inquiry -- "Why is this that such a price is put into the hands of sinners, when God who gives them the price foreknew the madness of their hearts?" Perhaps some are ready to think that God was not very wise to do so much for the salvation of the finally lost, and then leave things so that they do ultimately perish.

There are some things here to be taken into consideration in order to get the whole subject before us.

- 1. The making of these provisions has been instrumental in actually turning the hearts of many from sin to God. They could never have been saved if no such provision had been made. Their eternal happiness is a great good to the universe.
- 2. God has put this price into the hands of a great many who never use it, because in no other way could He give the price to those who would use it. In every age and country where the gospel has been preached, "some have believed the things spoken and some have believed not." How could the former have heard to their salvation, if the latter had not also been permitted to hear, although they refuse to obey and it issues in their damnation?

- 3. God doubtless designed to leave all sinners utterly without excuse. Hence He gives them the most perfect opportunity to secure their own salvation, and there leaves them -- alone responsible for rejecting the gospel if so they choose, and thus deciding their own destiny. It is His policy to leave free agents to act freely and bear alone the responsibility of their own free actions. So shall "every mouth be stopped, and all the world" of the ungodly stand guilty before both God and the universe.

Again, it is plainly revealed that God's design in putting such a price under such circumstances into the hands of sinners is to glorify Himself; that is, to pursue such a course as all the universe will approve as being perfectly holy and perfectly honorable to Himself. They will see that God was moved throughout by the purest love -- that every act of His, breathes good will to man -- that God plainly has done and has intended to do all He wisely could do for the salvation of all, even of those who will finally choose death and have their choice. All intelligent beings will be perfectly convinced that no sinner ever perished because of any want of love for his soul on God's part, nor for want of any effort that God could reasonably and wisely make for his salvation. They will see that every lost soul is lost because they would not have salvation when God had done enough on His part, and nothing remained but for them to do theirs. Then, seeing all this, they will glorify God. They will most perfectly exonerate Him from all responsibility for the eternal death of the sinner. They will infinitely applaud and adore both the wisdom and the love of God in this whole scheme of salvation.

And yet we often meet with a sinner who is full of impious fault-finding against God. Let us pause and reason with such a sinner.

Why should you look up into the face of your Maker and say, "Did you not know that I should act just so?" Your Maker might answer, "yes, I foreknew it, but the universe did not, and they never would have known it if it had not taken place before their eyes. If I had forborne to create those who will finally perish and had simply told the universe who I foresaw they would have acted in case I had created them, no intelligent beings in heaven, earth, or hell, would have believed Me. If I had attempted to show them how you would have rejected My dying Son, and done despite to My Spirit; how long you would have resisted every effort I could make; how you would have hardened your heart under the richest mercies I could have shown you, and forced your way to hell through the strongest persuasions, and fiercest terrors I could have thrown in your pathway to ruin, no one would have believed it possible. Suppose I had done just what you now demand; suppose I had forborne to make provisions of grace for those who would despise them, and had forborne to create those sinners, who if created would not embrace the gospel, and instead of letting such sin and such grace develop itself in action, had simply proclaimed what it would have been; who would have believed Me?" Neither the folly of the rejecting sinner, nor the grace of the long-suffering Savior could have been believed if facts had not compelled belief.

It is doubtless infinitely wise in God to make the fullest possible manifestations of His own love and wisdom. He will so develop His own course towards the wicked that no stain can attach to His own blessed throne. He will so arrange all His course that no

suspicion can arise in heaven, no murmur spring up in hell.

O what glorious developments there will be of the great fact that God is love! This alone will explain the reason why there is a price put into the sinner's hands to get wisdom, though he has no heart to improve it.

REMARKS.

1. Incidental to this arrangement is the fact that the sinner's refusing to improve the price put into his hands will greatly aggravate his own guilt. It must be so. No sinner can possibly avoid this result. If you will not improve your facilities for knowing and obeying God, and securing heaven, you must become vastly more guilty than without this price in your hands you could have been. The Bible is most explicit on this point. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the final day than for those cities which Christ taught. Everybody knows that reason harmonizes on this point with revelation.

2. Your ultimate damnation will be greatly aggravated if you will utterly reject this price put into your hands for wisdom. It had been better for you never to have heard of the gospel -- yea; better never to have been born than to have salvation made possible and then rejected by your foolish guilty choice.

Perhaps you would stop me here and ask, "why then did God give me birth at all? Why in such a land as this; why among Bibles, Sabbaths, and Christian friends? Why did He give me all these things when He knew that I would abuse them, and thus aggravate my own damnation?"

Sinner, does it become you to ask such questions as these? Are you not perfectly free in all you do? Is it not of your own free choice that you keep on in sin, despite of all God does to stop you and turn you back to obedience? Are you not most fully conscious that you pursue your career of rebellion against God, of choice, and of choice do not embrace the Lord Jesus as your Savior? Who then have you to blame but yourself?

You may lie down at last in hell, yet will God appear glorious in all that He has done. He will appear before all heaven, and all hell too, to have been kind and most sincere--most truly desirous of your salvation; yea infinitely concerned and anxious to save you. So anxious that He spared not His own Son, but made Him for a propitiation for the sins of the world. And who has fought God in all His efforts to save you? Who, but yourself? Who then is in fault? Who must bear the responsibility of the sin of your soul? Surely not its Maker, for He sent His own Son to save that soul! Have you done as much to save it? Have you not done everything you could to destroy it? Then on whom lies the guilt and responsibility of its eternal ruin?

Now, for the sake of relieving you of the burden of this responsibility and guilt, shall the Deity withhold these glorious developments of His own wisdom and love? Shall He, for your sakes, rob the universe of the blessings accruing from these developments?

The text rather assumes than asserts the fact that the sinner has no heart to improve his price for salvation, yet this is an appalling fact. None can deny it. Precisely this is the great and the only difficulty in the way of your being saved. You need this salvation greatly, but you do not feel that

need, you do not care for this salvation; you don't desire it and ask it with any earnestness which at all corresponds with its value. How can you expect to find by such seeking? You long for happiness--not for holiness. You would fain be saved from hell and not from sin. For a salvation from sin you have no heart whatever, you would like to be saved from hell by some scheme of your own providing; but this scheme of God's providing, you scorn. You cast it from you, and dash it away. You cannot bear to be wholly indebted to the grace of God for it, and you do not like another claim which it imposes, viz. that you should wholly die to sin.

Such an abuse of one's own intelligence or reason is the greatest curse a man can inflict upon himself. It is infinitely more wretched and cursed than to be a beast, nay, more than to be transformed to a beast. I have sometimes seen persons who were convinced of this. They saw themselves so guilty and so utterly without excuse that they envied the very beasts, and longed to become beasts themselves. Yes, they have sometimes cried out--O that I might become like the toad, or that dog which is kicked about the streets. O, sinner, if you will not yield to the law of your reason, how dreadful to you, must be the curse of having a reason! How fearful the guilt and the doom of being made a rational being, and of having prostituted your reason to the basest of folly!

Again it is impossible really and truly to respect impenitent sinners. Nobody can respect them. They do not respect one another. They do not even respect themselves. Their course is such as most utterly to forbid all proper self-respect. Self-respect demands for its foundation what by no means exists in their case. There can be no proper self-respect unless we are conscious of acting according to the best light we have. Every man who acts otherwise must be, in his honest moments, ashamed of himself. Hence a man can have no just self-respect, who knows that he has the price of salvation placed in his hands, and yet is conscious of having no heart to use it.

Plainly then, a man who forfeits his own self-respect, and the respect of all mankind, has no right to demand the respect of his fellow men. You cannot respect him, any more than you can respect the devil. How would you feel if you should see the devil? Could you treat him with respect? Suppose you had before your mind in an instant his whole character--his towering intellect, and his utter perversion of it to hellish purposes--his whole career of malice and rebellion against God; could you respect him? Add to all this the supposition that Satan has had a Savior provided and offered, and that he has proudly and madly spurned this salvation; suppose that God has given him the Holy Spirit, and watched over him and kept him out of his deserved place in hell for half a century, "not willing that he should perish, but that he should come to repentance;" and yet Satan had only grown tenfold more desperate in sin. Then, knowing all this of him, could you respect him? Oh, no; your soul would recoil from such a monster in wickedness with horror! Oh, you would cry, what do I see? The very prince of devils--a being who has fought against God, who has spurned the redeeming love, and the redeeming blood of Jesus--who has resisted and grieved away the Holy Ghost, and has madly sought to ruin himself forever and ever! O what a being is this? Could you forbear to curse him? Your soul would so deeply execrate such conduct, methinks the spirit of cursing would burn in your soul, and you could not forbear to cry aloud; O cursed be the monster that can fight against God, and deny His Son, and despite to His Spirit! Let curses scathe the being who can stultify his intelligence for the sake of being as wicked as he can be.

And in these feelings of deep horror at such dreadful sin and folly, there might be no malevolence; it

might be only the deep response of the inner soul against such wrong, the burning testimony of uprightness against such horrible perversity. Listen to St. Paul. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, accursed." So the pure spirits in heaven feel. When they see your wickedness they will be horrified, just as you would be to see the devil himself, and to see disclosed the depths of his depravity.

Again, it is impossible that we should not intensely loathe the conduct of sinners. It infinitely deserves to be loathed, and all right-minded beings must loathe it.

Again, it is just as impossible that sinners should not loathe themselves whenever they come to take a fair and full view of their own conduct. Now, I beg of you, sinners, not to complain of others for not giving you that respect which you cannot give yourself. The fact is, that both you and we are so made that we cannot rationally have any other feelings than compassionate abhorrence of such a character as yours. All mortal beings must abhor you. All hell, all heaven, and if there be any other moral beings in the universe, they need but to see what you are, and what you have done, and they will utterly abhor you.

Let me go round and ask this assembly. Young friend, you have lived here these many years in impenitence, how ought this church to regard you? You have been rejecting salvation all your life. You have lived through several revivals in this place, hardening your heart more and more, and becoming more and more mad in sin. Four years or more perhaps you have spent in an institution founded in prayer, watched with tears, taught by men who labor for Christ, and supported by the "two mites" gathered from the humble cottages where there are tears and prayers for Zion; in such an institution you have passed your four years term, and still can scorn the service and the redeeming blood of Jesus. O, when you came up unto this stage to deliver your commencement speech, would it be strange if hosts of the "spirits unseen, who walk the earth" should break through the curtain that commonly veils them from our view and vent their hisses and curses upon you before the great assembly? Would it be an undeserved doom if God Himself should hurl you from this stage to hell?

It is at least safe to say that there would be bitter grief over the career of folly. How does that praying mother feel? I knew him well, she says, he was needy and I took him into my family and boarded him; he was sick, and I nursed him; he was far from God and I prayed for him, and with many tears have I besought him to return to his own Savior--O must it be in vain! And there is the agent who labored to collect funds to sustain the Institution. Faint and sick he held on his weary way, gathering up the little offerings made by piety and self-denial upon the altar of Immanuel. He wanted to raise up a spiritual ministry; he felt that the world needed such a ministry and he would not shrink from being spent in such a service. And yet, to such an institution you come and pervert all its facilities for education that you may train yourself for mightier warfare against God, and for pulling down a heavier damnation upon your own head.

You know that these things are so. Then do not call this scolding, and let your heart rise up against it. No. It is not scolding, but is truth and deep compassionate sympathy. When you get to hell, will you parade yourself in your pride and supposed dignity? Nay; you will hide your head in shame and everlasting self-reproach.

When sinners set up a claim to the respect of their fellow men, they are dishonest. They demand what they know no man can honestly give. What then can we say of you? Only that you are a poor degraded fool.

Now, do not suppose from anything that I have said, that angels and spirits do not pity you. They do. I pity all the devils in hell. Often, as I have thought of their condition, I have said, "poor devils, poor devils, how much I pity you!"

Do the people treat you kindly? Everything that is better than the fires and curses of hell, is better than you deserve--is gratuitous kindness. Don't imagine that this is real respect for you. No, it ought not to be, for you don't respect yourself and never can, so long as you madly fight against God and against your own well-being.

It is an infinite pity that you should have this great price in your hands, and no heart to use it. O, what an infinite pity! You need salvation, and God has in great mercy, and at great expense brought it within your reach. What is that which the sinner holds in his hands! O, it is the price to get wisdom; alas, that he will not use it! Salvation is brought to his parched and burning lips, but he will not drink. Madness is in his heart.

Go to your closet sinner, and tell God--say to Him; Thou hast held me up from hell unto this day, and given for me Thine own Son to die. Christ put into my hands the price of wisdom--but Lord, I have not the least inclination to use it. I feel nothing in my heart but contempt of this great salvation. I cannot forsake my sins today, if I knew I should thus secure the richest glories of Heaven.

Now, sinner, be honest enough to say this before God, and confess it before men. Fix your eye steadfastly on this dreadful pride and madness of your own heart, till you loathe, abhor, and forever renounce it.

Seeking the Kingdom of God First

Lecture XV

August 27, 1845

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Text.--Matt. 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The Jews were greatly mistaken in respect to the nature of that kingdom which their Messiah was to

set up. They expected a kingdom like the kingdoms of this world, invested with earthly splendor, fitted to aggrandize their nation, and minister to their national pride. Christ sought to undeceive them. He told them that His kingdom did not come with outward show--that it must be within men, and that it was not of this world. He would have them understand that it was spiritual, and not temporal; demanding the homage of the heart, and not the pomp and pageant, so commonly rendered to royalty. The simple idea of this kingdom is that Christ Himself reigns in the hearts of His people, securing the perfect submission of the will, and the consecration of every power to Himself. Thus His kingdom is within; it is invisible. It puts on no outward glare. In the hearts of men He writes His laws by His Spirit, and thus rules over them to deliver them from Satan and sin, and translate them into His own kingdom of peace and love.

The subjects of this kingdom are shut up to no particular location. Each in the sphere where providence has called him to reside and to his master's will, may there be truly a member of this invisible kingdom. Christ may be reigning over him, and he may be indeed a subject and a citizen of this kingdom of God.

This is the kingdom we are required in our text to seek. To seek it implies that we seek to belong to it--seek to know Christ's will and to do it--seek to be recognized by Christ as one of His subjects, and seek to promote the interests of this kingdom, as all true subjects of any kingdom do, and should do if the government deserves their support. He who truly seeks first the kingdom of God, seeks to be as really and perfectly governed by Christ now, as the holy in Heaven are. He would have Christ living and reigning within him so that every thought shall be brought into obedience.

We are required, not only to seek the kingdom of God, but also "His righteousness." The original word here rendered righteousness, is sometimes rendered justification. The radical idea seems to be simply this--being right with God--coming into a state of acceptance with Him. This we know must in our case include both the free pardon of past sin and the being sanctified so that we are not actually sinning. So long as His law condemns us for unpardoned sin, or so long as we are actually sinning, it would be monstrous to suppose that God can accept us as righteous, and that we are right in His sight.

Hence, when the righteousness of God as in our text, is spoken of as a thing for us to seek, it must include both pardon and sanctification.

The command to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first, enjoins upon us to treat this subject as of absolute and supreme importance. This must be the great business of our lives. Nothing else is allowed to have any practical importance compared with this.

The injunction--seek God's kingdom first, implies that we seek it first in point of time. It should be the first thing attended to. It is not merely to be admitted as of first importance, but should really be put first in point of time. The first thoughts of each morning should be given to it. And whenever God's word, or His providence brings before our mind the invitations or the claims of this kingdom, we are to remember that now is the accepted time. Now, first in order, before anything else, let the concerns of your soul with the kingdom of God and His righteousness have the first regard.

It is also implied that we seek this kingdom with supreme earnestness. This is fully involved in the

points just spoken of. We are required to agonize to enter in at the strait gate--to press hard for entrance, with the greatest earnestness, and the most strenuous efforts. Let the soul be indeed in agony to carry the point and make sure of admission into the kingdom of God. To the same purport are very many passages which I might quote from the Scriptures, all going to show that God requires us to seek with all our hearts, to lay out the utmost strength of our souls, if we would successfully resist the devil, and really break the chains of sin, and secure so great a treasure as eternal life.

It is also implied that we seek the kingdom of God with perseverance. We must press on till we obtain. This is the great business of life--to get back from revolt, to obedience--from our state of rejection, cast out from God, to a state of acceptance, where we shall be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Then let us persevere in seeking the whole of this change until it be completely effected. The nature of the case demands such perseverance. The blessings within reach are too great and precious to be lost for want of perseverance in the pursuit. They will amply reward you for a whole life of most earnest seeking.

Again, the kingdom of God would be the object of supreme engrossment. You must bring all your powers into action. Your intellect must be thoroughly awake--your sensibility to the claims of truth must be all alive, and your will must act with inflexible decision. Absolutely your whole mind must be aroused to its utmost exertion.

Still again, the command implies that everything else must be postponed to this. The spirit of the precept demands that everything else be thrown into the back-ground, and this be placed foremost of all.

When Christ was upon earth, He admitted no apology for delay--would allow nothing to interpose between the soul, and its present duty. On a certain occasion, Christ called a man to follow Himself. The man replied, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." No, said Christ, "leave the dead to bury their dead"--the dead in sin to bury the natural dead--"but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." One might suppose that if any circumstances would justify delay, these would. God has said, "Honor thy father;" and the instinctive feelings of propriety, as well as respect for the dead are wont to secure a prompt regard to these last offices which we can pay to the departed. Shall we then forsake a father's burial, and leave to others, yea to wicked men, these last obsequies? Yea, let the dead bury their dead; thou hast a call from God--go thou and preach the kingdom.

But "let me go first and bid them farewell which are at home in my house." No; said Christ, no man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Now it is plain that our Savior puts these strong cases for the very purpose of enforcing strongly this point--that nothing else whatever may be placed before prompt obedience to this great precept, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

The spirit of the text requires that everything shall be promptly sacrificed that comes in competition with this. Let nothing else come up to crowd this aside; seek this first; make this your present business; if your father is dead, no matter, attend to this; cut off your right hand if it interfere with this work--make any sacrifice whatever which needs to be made in order to your successful prosecution of

this great work of seeking first the kingdom of God. No consideration whatever may be allowed to divert the mind from this subject.

To this command Christ has annexed a promise. This next claims our attention.

You will observe that the condition of this promise is, "Seek first the kingdom of God;"--as if He had said "If you will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, you shall have all these earthly things of which He had been speaking. You shall be fed as surely as I feed the ravens, and clothed as well as I clothe the lilies. You need not be anxious for these things. It is my business to provide them. Mark the lilies of the field; how they grow--they toil not--they spin not; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. And if God so gloriously attires the grass only for a day, and is burnt tomorrow, will He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Therefore, be not anxious about these earthly things. Let the Gentiles who know not their Father on high, seek after these things anxiously--but remember that your Father knows your wants and will take care to supply them. Only, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Consider also that your anxieties about these things can do no good. Which of you by ever so much anxiety can add to his stature one cubit?

We are to understand this promise as including all that is necessary for us, either in time or eternity. The connection however, shows that Christ had principal reference to provisions for our earthly wants. He knows what these wants are. He formed the constitution which creates them; and He passed through this very state of physical want Himself. He understood how strong the tendencies of our minds are to excessive anxiety about the requisite supply. Hence He says--I will take away from you all apology for neglecting the things of My kingdom--you shall have no excuse for not making religion the chief thing; let it be your first business--first in point of time--first in your esteem--first in the earnestness with which you seek it; then trust Me to make up all the other things that you need. Do My business and I will do yours. Take care of My kingdom--throw your whole soul into its interests, and I will supply your physical wants. Do your duty as I enjoin it, and I will be responsible for these lesser things.

It is very easy to see that for Christ to take this course, and require us to seek the kingdom of God first is very reasonable, even though He had annexed no promise; because,

- 1. It is of supreme importance to us that we should attend to these spiritual things. The infinite well-being of the soul depends upon it.
- 2. The time is so short: and the fact that we know not how short it is, renders it indispensable that we should attend to it immediately. Life is so uncertain that we can place no dependence upon the prospect of doing another day what we put over from this. "Who knoweth what a day may bring forth?"
- 3. Another consideration: Every hour's delay makes success more doubtful, and your peril of damnation more portentous. Your heart will be more hardened, temptations will have gained more power, and a mightier struggle will be demanded ere victory can be sure.

- 4. If you neglect but for one moment too long, it will be fatal. There is a moment beyond which if you neglect seeking the kingdom of God, you can never attend to it with success thereafter. If you wait beyond that point, no mercy remains; the door of heaven is shut against you; your damnation is certain.

We cannot know where this point is. It may be this hour, this moment. This sinner, may be your last opportunity. If so, how important that Christ should require you to seek salvation now! And how vital that you should heed and obey the call!

- 5. Unless the subject is treated as of supreme importance, it is of no use to attend to it at all. Some persons attend to it just enough to make their damnation as certain as it can possibly be made, and as dreadful. Let one attend just enough to quiet his conscience and lull his fears--just enough to keep the truth before his mind and learn to resist it--just enough to habituate himself to resist the claims of God and do despite to the Spirit of grace; he is in the worst condition possible. He is commonly decent enough to prevent being aroused and alarmed by his own open wickedness. He does nothing that shocks his own moral sense and startles him from his deep lethargy; so he moves along waxing daily worse and worse, till he wakes at last in hell.

Now it were better for this man to let the subject entirely alone than to attend to it in this sleepy, profitless, heart-hardening way. It is better also for the sake of others that he should let the subject alone than give it only such attention; for he will greatly stumble others and lead them down to perdition. His example induces others to follow him; and if his course is the most ruinous that can be for himself, so will it be for his followers. But it was in view of this very influence that Christ said of some, "I would that thou wert cold or hot; because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Christ therefore prefers that you would let the subject entirely alone, rather than attend to it just enough to quiet your fears, evade conviction, harden your heart, induce others to ruin, and never do your duty.

- 6. The supreme importance of the subject would render Christ's command in the text more reasonable even without the annexed promise. For even if we were to suffer the want of bread and the worst pinchings of poverty, this were infinitely better than to lose the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Therefore, it must be wise to seek the kingdom of God first.

It would be supreme folly to grasp the lesser good so eagerly as to lose that which is infinitely greater. How much more now, since to him who seeks first God's kingdom, the promise is given--all these things shall be added unto thee. Indeed we have no reason left us for neglecting obedience to this great and good command.

REMARKS.

1. The command and promise in our text strongly illustrate God's great care for our souls. If God had no care for us, or but little care for us, He would not use so much effort to urge us to secure salvation. Why is it that God reiterates these commands so incessantly, giving line upon line, and precept upon precept? Only because He would awaken and urge us to those efforts which our case demands. But especially I ask, Why does God append to His commands to great and precious promises? He knows

our circumstances. He sees how great our wants are, and how many, and therefore He says--your soul is in danger and will be lost if you suffer your chief attention to be engrossed in cares for earthly things. I entreat you, therefore, to take care of your soul, and I will see to your physical wants. Do you by all means seek first My kingdom and righteousness, and I will see that your "bread shall be given and your water shall be sure."

This is just like an infinite Father. It is as if a father should come out from the East to visit his son in Ohio, and should find him almost worn down with toil, laboring hard to get in his wheat and his hay that he might feed his family and pay his debts--but his great labor and care are crushing his health and putting his very life in peril. See, he raises blood, and his cold night sweats but too plainly show that he must change his course and get relief, or his wife is a widow and his babes are orphans. The father sees all this in an instant. My son, he says, attend first to your precious health and do all you can to restore it and prolong your life; I will take care of your hay and your wheat; I will see that all the other things you need shall be added if you will only secure your precious life. So he writes home to his distant family that they need not expect him home again for a long time yet;--he finds business with his son of more importance than anything else can be.

Now this would be a striking case of parental sympathy and interest--just such a case as we have in our text of the parental care of our great Father for our salvation.

2. The disinterestedness of God is very affectingly manifested in this command and promise. What would you say of a father who should do as I have just represented? Just leave all care of your business to me, he says to his son; go at once into your house and take your bed as much as your health needs; and he sends home to the dear ones there that they must forego the pleasure of seeing him for some months yet, for here are other interests not his own which his heart will not allow him to leave neglected; this father you would say manifested a most admirable degree of disinterested affection. You might perhaps naturally expect all this of one who was really a father, yet it would show that indeed he had a father's heart. So of God. In making these provisions for supplying our earthly wants and in taking from our minds the burden of earthly cares, He has shown Himself a God of love. That He should be so careful to urge us up to duty and to remove all hindrances so that nothing need divert or interrupt us--this indeed shows us a God full of goodness and rich in love.

3. To refuse to be diverted from God's service by worldly cares and to give our whole heart to the Lord, is the only way to make sure of earthly good. If any of you would make sure of whatever temporal good you need, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then you shall have a promise which is infinitely more secure than any stocks or deposits in all the land. It will be safe to trust God. He who makes the rain and the sunshine; He who clothes the lilies and feeds the young ravens, knows how to reach your wants and fulfill His own promises. He cannot lack either the resources or the will.

4. Unbelief urges a very different course from this. Unbelief always professes to be sorely afraid of tempting God by neglecting temporal matters. So much afraid is it of overdoing this thing of having faith in God's explicit promises!

Now it cannot be doubted that the Savior meant to rebuke this unbelief and urge strongly the duty of

casting all our care upon God, only taking care on our part that we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. He meant to show us that we have no room for fear about earthly good, provided we take all due care of our souls and of all the things of His kingdom.

And this was in our Lord a most wise and beneficent foresight. For who does not know that for one reason or for another, almost all persons are excusing themselves for neglecting the soul. The student must study. Most certainly, and without doubt, he must now get his lessons. What! do you call him away from his lessons to seek the kingdom of God first! What! he cries out, shall I not lose my education if I listen to such a call? Now is my harvest time--now is the time to cultivate my mind--I came here to study--it were a pity if I may not get my lessons first, and seek the kingdom of God when I have a convenient season!

Yet let me say here that ever so much proper attention to religion can never be any loss to us. It never robs us of other things which are really better. The student who seeks first the kingdom of God rationally, will not need to neglect any useful study. He cannot lose anything on the whole by putting each and all things in their proper places, and giving to each its due measure of attention. The wise-minded student may not know so much of Shakespeare or of Byron--may have less to do with Homer or with Virgil; but he will not therefore fail of learning the things that are most useful. I do not hesitate to say that the student who shall obey this precept will come out ahead of all his fellow-students who disobey it; he will not be an intellectual drone, a lounging idler, only half awake to the value of knowledge, and only half alive to pursue it. No, his mind will apprehend the value of truth and will press forward with quenchless longings to attain it. Hence his mind will move under such impulses and be encompassed with such an atmosphere of light that he will be a better man, will have more of all useful knowledge, and will have a better balanced mind than any of his associates who seek first something else and not God's kingdom.

The same may be said of men of any condition in life--of those who till the ground--of those who fill the shop, or move behind the counter. Let a man anywhere obey this precept you will find that his temporal wants will be supplied. He may not get so rich or get rich so fast or by such means as shall load himself down too much to run the Christian race at all--so much as to crush himself down to hell--this may not be his course, but he will have all real good.

5. Everything really valuable must be lost by disobeying this command. If a man neglects the kingdom of God, nothing which he can obtain is really valuable to him. Suppose he gets an education. This will only aggravate his final condemnation.

I wonder if this is usually understood. Do these young men and young women understand this principle? It is plain and undeniable. Our future happiness and misery will be as our mental cultivation and as the development of our intelligence. The more mental power and the wider range of views we have, the larger is the scope for bitter reflection, and the keener the pangs of self-reproach and remorse in that world where the wicked become their own worst tormentors.

Did you ever consider what Byron's state of mind must have been when he spent whole nights in writing poems to save his soul from the unutterable agonies of reflection upon himself--to keep himself from rolling in hell while he yet lived upon the earth! And do you ask, why was this? Because

his mind was highly cultivated, and its original endowments were of the very first order--because he saw truth and its relations clearly, and felt its force deeply--and therefore could not bear the terrible reactions of such mental powers when they turned in upon his soul to scourge and lash himself as the guiltiest being on earth. In mental power and in self-inflicted torment too, he is like the devil. Perhaps one more like the devil never trod the earth.

Sinner, if you don't mean to serve God, I advise you to be as near an idiot as possible. Keep away from knowledge; go beyond the Rocky Mountains--go and fish for whales--shut off every flashing ray of light you can--contract your mind within the narrowest possible compass; don't seek knowledge unless you mean to pile up a mass of fuel that shall burn your soul forever. Keep away from knowledge and mental cultivation. What have you to do with an expanded mind, and sharpened intellect? It will only inflict the keener stings of remorse and furnish you the more scope for everlasting self-torment.

I said, nothing is valuable to you unless you mean to seek first the kingdom of God. Every enjoyment, even life itself, is a curse to him who is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Every abused mercy augments that fearful treasure of wrath. The sooner you stop eating and drinking and breathing the better. "Every beating pulse you tell" will rise up in the judgment against you to swell the evidence of your great guilt in not seeking life when God besought you to live. It were better for you not to have lived at all unless you seek first the blessing of God and eternal life.

Hence, if you neglect to seek first the kingdom of God in pretense of seeking other good first, you are infinitely mistaken. You will lose the good you seek, and also the greater good you would not seek but should have sought. Let me tell that student who neglects the kingdom of God and drives his studies that he may keep up with his class or keep before them; that he drives on upon his own ruin. The good you seek to gain will be an infinite curse to you. If it should prove a blessing, it must be in spite of God's threatened curses; and surely you ought to know that it is a vain thing to fight against God. Surely whom the Lord blesses is blessed, and whom the Lord curses is cursed. You will find it so.

6. Again, it is plainly implied that if we seek first the kingdom of God, we shall not only have these other things promised, but have the kingdom of God too. Certainly our Lord meant to imply that we should have the very thing we seek first.

7. If we really obey this command, it will be manifest in all the arrangements of our common life. Observe a business man who obeys this command. He never takes upon himself any business which must crowd out a proper attention to religion. You will see in all his arrangements, that he makes provision for religious duties as much as he makes provision to eat his daily meals. When did you ever know a man lay out his business so as to reverse no time for his daily food and nightly sleep? Go into any house and you see provision made for sleeping and eating. You will see perhaps articles of food and means of cooking it. You will say--well, these people expect doubtless to eat and to sleep. This enters into their arrangements. So of every man who means to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. Whatever his principle business is, you will see his arrangements made accordingly. So long as he has his reason, he never can make his arrangements for his time so as to leave his principal business unprovided for. If his principal business be to seek the kingdom of God, everything will be shaped accordingly. He will no sooner fail to do this than fail to make his family arrangements for

eating and sleeping.

But let us go into that student's room. We can probably learn what he is seeking first. The door opens; we pass along in; there are his books; there lies Byron and Shakespeare; let us look for his Bible. Aye, his Bible is not there; we look for it on the table, for possibly he keeps it there and goes to it regularly for his spiritual bread--but no, it is not there. Look under his pillow. Alexander the Great is said to have slept always with his Homer under his pillow--but not so with this student. You find no Bible there. At last it is found in the bottom of his trunk. It has not been opened since his mother put it there on the very day he left that home of his childhood. It was his mother who put it there we know; for see, she has marked many passages with her tears. O, she did hope this dear son would ponder and learn to love those blessed pages. With what throes of heart, such as none but a parent feels, did she send him away and commit him to her own Father and Savior. O, has he forgotten all a mother's prayers?

But perhaps the Bible has been taken out of his trunk, but has lain on his shelf unmoved until the dust has coated it over--a witness against him that he heeds not the words of eternal life. Or you find it at last on his table, but under his Cicero and a huge pile of newspapers and novels--ah, that youth is not seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. His arrangements are not made at all for this end.

But there is another scene. Here is a student's Bible worn with much and constant use--wet with many tears--Oh, how often has his soul been feasted as with angel's food from those exceeding great and precious promises!

It is said of one of the Apostles that after his death his knees were found to be callous from his frequent and long-continued kneeling in prayer. So it might be with you if you were really given to prayer and mighty wrestlings with God.

8. When persons are really engaged about their souls, they will not suffer themselves to be placed in circumstances so engrossing as to be crowded away from seeking God supremely. They would dread such a state worse than death.

9. Many hold this truth in theory who after all utterly deny it in practice. Almost everybody will admit that we ought to seek first the kingdom of God, and that religion is the supreme business of life; yet how almost constantly is this denied in practice?

As I have kept my eye upon the course of things in this community, I have seen almost everything crowded in here to draw men away from God. The students get up society after society to cultivate the intellect; but where are the societies got up to cultivate the heart? If all were right here, should we not see a different course of things; should we not see something crowded in almost everywhere to make the heart better--to awaken religious feeling and arouse attention to religious truth, and carry abroad a religious influence over all hearts. O, if this truth were really believed, we should see it reduced to practice by the students and by all the church, let their vocation be what it may. But now we see a great many students constantly pressed--full of engrossing business and wasting care--and why? What are they doing? Are they making ceaseless efforts to promote their own or others spirituality? Their

efforts surely are ardent and vigorous enough to lead you to suppose so. O, if such were only the fact!

But judging from the actual life of many of these students, one would suppose that Christ had said--Seek first to get your lessons--seek first to master your Algebra or your Latin. And the course of things in the business community is such as it might rightly be if Christ had said--Seek first to get your business done in good time and in the most perfect manner;--first see to it that your crops are duly sown and timely gathered; then shall all needful things be added to you.

Such is a very common state of things in this community. It is such also with many of the students, but not with all as I am happy to know. There are some here who show that their hearts are upon the Zion of God. But having made these exceptions, the rest seem to live as if Christ had said to the student--Get your studies first, and you shall lose nothing in point of spirituality.

The fact is, if we are ever going to be seriously and thoroughly pious, we must make all our arrangements accordingly. Wherever you see a man thoroughly pious, you see a man who in fact does make all his arrangements with a view to this great object. He will not let labor or business of any kind interfere with his going to meeting, when he can go without fearing to displease God by neglecting some other apparent duty. His seasons of prayer are too precious to be lost. He cannot on any account forego the pleasure of meeting with God a few times at least each day. He is conscious that he needs to be strengthened daily with might in the inner man. Hence he cannot live without prayer.

10. No Institution can do much to bless the world unless it practically sets religion foremost. I mean what I say--practically; not in theory only, but in practice. An Institution which takes some other practical ground, may make students intellectual--may train them well enough for the bar or for medicine; but students so trained, must suffer fearfully in their spirituality, and if they go into the ministry, they can do little indeed to promote the salvation of souls. They cannot have power without deep piety, and they cannot have this unless they seek it first. The first place is its only right place. Make piety a secondary thing in any Institution, and the Spirit of God feels Himself dishonored, and cannot bless.

Oh, brethren, let us anchor this Institution fast to this only right principle--religion the chief concern--seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Faith in its Relations to the Love of God

Lecture XVI

October 22, 1845

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Text.--John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

By the "world" in this passage is meant the human race. The passage affirms God's love for the whole human family.

The word "perish" does not mean annihilation, nor does the word "life" denote mere existence. It is plain that here, as often elsewhere, these terms are contrasted, so that if "life" meant mere existence, "perish" might, by the force of the antithesis, denote non-existence. But neither of these words can have these sense in the text. In fact, the words perish, destruction, &c., do not primarily denote annihilation, but only a change in the mode of existence. It is one of the greatest errors in biblical interpretation to force upon them this meaning. This narrow, short-sighted view of their meaning entirely overlooks both the glory of that life which comes to us through Christ, and the fearfulness of that woe which awaits the finally impenitent.

But we must pursue the thread of our discourse and inquire,

I. Into the kind of love here spoken of.

II. What it is to believe in Christ.

III. What is implied in true faith.

I. The kind of love here spoken of.

In the text we are told that God so loved the world as to give his Son for it. Does the emphasis upon the word so turn solely upon the degree of this love without respect to its nature? Does the text mean simply to assert that God loved the world so much, or that his love was moreover of such a nature that He could yield up his Son for a lost world? Plain the latter comes into consideration, and we are to study the nature as well as the degree of this love.

Directing our attention to this point it is obvious to remark,

- 1. That this was not the love of complacency. Complacency is a delight in the character of its object, or in other words is benevolence modified by the consideration of a holy character in its object. Now at the time God so loved us as to give his Son, there was nothing in us upon which complacency could rest. God so loved us as to form the purpose of giving up his Son before any soul was converted--while the race lay before his mind in the attitude of rebels. God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It could therefore have been no love of complacency which loved us while yet sinners.
- 2. It was not the love of fondness or natural affection--such love as parents have for their children. Some seem to suppose that this was the love of God--but they utterly mistake its real

nature.

- 3. But positively this love is without doubt benevolence--good-willing, a disposition to promote the highest good of beings, not, as some conceive of it, without regard to their persons as individuals, but with such regard to individuals as to their own personal state and wants. This in general is doubtless the true conception of this love of God which induced him to give up his Son.
- 4. This love on the part of God is entirely disinterested. This is most fully apparent in the fact that God was willing to make personal sacrifices for the end in view. Instead of having any immediate good to himself as the object, the text tells us that he so loved the world as to make the greatest possible personal sacrifice--that of giving up his own Son to ignominy, torture, death. What more decided proof could be given of disinterested love than this!
- 5. It was impartial love. It fasted on the race, on all the individuals of the race, and on all without respect to persons. It had no special favors for certain castes; it looked not at certain classes as such; it made no distinction between the rich and the poor, the free and the bond, the high or the low, the white or the red or the black; no; it rested impartially and equally on all. It looked not with such an eye as men often cast over their fellows--scorning some and adoring others; nay, it was an eye of pity and love for all. It raised no other question than this--What is the value of each person's well-being? Then each is appreciated according to its real value.
- 6. It was a holy love. Intense affection it was indeed for sinning man; yet had it no complacency towards sin. Nothing could be more utterly opposed to sin than this love which sought the good of sinners. Else it had never devised such a plan of salvation, had never made a sacrifice of the just for the unjust. Love sought earnestly to save, yet only by putting away all iniquity--only by providing a way of pardon which fully honored the divine law--only by providing such influences as should effectually cleanse the soul from its pollutions.
- 7. This love was just. God could not let his love conflict with justice. He could not leave this throne to suffer by the pardon of sin without such an atonement as should fully sustain the dignity of law and effectually secure the interests of other beings who might be tempted to sin. God's love was blended with justice, else he had not given up his Son.
- 8. This love of God for sinners was real. Sometimes persons speak of both the love and the wrath of God, as if it had no reality--as if the Bible language on these points was wholly an accommodation to human weakness, meaning perhaps that God will act as men do when they love or are angry, while yet no such affections as these really exist in the divine mind. But the truth is that God really feels, yes, really has the very affections and states of mind which these words describe--and in all their most fervid intensity. His love is most intense, most sincere--all-absorbing--self-consuming. If you have experienced it you know how strong affections sometimes absorb and seem to consume the very vitality of the soul; the physical powers fail under the consuming, exhausting influence of intense mental action.

You know it was said of Christ, "The zeal of thine house has eaten me up"--as if his very being were consumed by his burning zeal for the house and the cause of God. It seems

clear from several intimations in scripture that our Savior had the appearance of premature old age. "So marred was his visage more than any man and his form more than the sons of men," that kings and nations wondered at the strange spectacle.

On one occasion the Jews said to him "Thou art not yet fifty years old." We may infer from this that he appeared to be nearly fifty years old, though in fact as the Bible shows he was not much over thirty. Hence we may presume that his physical frame was intensely shattered while yet young in years. He must have used up his vital powers with consuming, self-regardless efforts for human well-being and by the intense, burning power of his mental excitement.

So of the love of God. It is not to be supposed that mind itself is consumed with intense action; but the body is; and in mortal flesh, the waste upon the body becomes an index often of the intense and exhausting action of the soul. The love of God may be seen in the love of Christ. "He that hath seen me," said Christ, "hath seen the Father."

- 9. This love is great, beyond all finite comprehension. Perhaps we get the most vivid conception of God's love by means of comparisons. See that parent who loves his child most tenderly. His son may be wayward, insolent, ungrateful; yet shall you see the father's love unchanging; still he forbears, still he is patient and long-suffering; still he waits and hopes, and plans every conceivable method to restore that way-ward son. Verily here is love, but it is only such love as God's towards us--but infinitely less in degree.

See also that affectionate mother. Her little infant frets and cries--her love endures it patiently. That dear child will not let her sleep, and her nervous system is well nigh prostrated; still for her own child what will not a mother's love endure?

But oh, what is all this compared with the matchless forbearance and long-suffering of the God of Love! We shall never appreciate this till we see in their true colors the sinner's abuse and contempt of God's law and of his gospel too--till we see how God waits on the sinner and how the sinner grows only the more stubborn and insolent; how God sends him repeated tokens of his love and he only mocks God's mercy in return. Such is God's love that He not only forbears to punish, but sends his own Son to save,--yea sends his own Son to die that the rebel might live. What a spectacle! There lay spread out before the eye of God a world steeped in wickedness, reeking in its own pollutions--mad in its own rebellion; yet the heart of God pitied--there burned in his bosom the most intense love, and from his inmost soul he cried out--"How can I give thee up!" O what love was this! Love not only sincere and real, but infinitely great.

We are to think of this love to enemies; not to friends. It was not such love as husbands have for their wives, or parents for their children; no, but "God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This it is that commends and sets off this amazing love of God in a light so glorious. Behold, says another apostle--behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we--that such as we,--should be called the sons of God! Well might he say--"what MANNER of love!" Was ever love like this in earth or heaven?

- 10. This is a most persevering and efficient love. It is not a mere emotion that flashes and burns itself out without producing action. It is not that sort of good feeling seen among men, that goes off in good wishes and leaves no fruit behind; that says to each object of need, "be ye warmed, and be ye filled," but gives not the things requisite. O, had God's love for man been only such as this, how deep and dire the ruin in which we had sunk, hopelessly, and forever!

The love of God to man was no empty and evanescent emotion. It has continued to sway the attributes of Deity for thousands of years, and will for coming ages, how many soever may be included in the divine plan for perfecting this glorious scheme of salvation. The love of God to man has called forth his infinite wisdom to devise, his omnipotence to execute, and we might perhaps say that this love has employed, not to say, used up, the divine energies since the creation of the world. O, who can adequately estimate all that God has done already in devising and carrying into effect this great scheme of human salvation?

- 11. This love moreover is particular, and not merely general. By this, I mean that it fastens upon individuals, seeking their good, and does not merely embrace the mass as a whole. We are too apt to conceive of this love as only general, and not as particular at all. We are not wont to feel that God truly and deeply loves us--yea, our own insignificant selves. Yet, this is the only right mode of apprehending the love of God. That eye that marks each falling sparrow, and counts the hairs of our head, is surely able to notice the meanest of his intelligent creatures, and the smallest circumstances which can affect their happiness.

II. What it is to believe in Christ.

It is something more than to be convinced of the truth of what is said in the Bible. This conviction may be in our minds as firm as the mountains; and yet we may have no gospel faith. Devils may believe, and in this sense they do--wicked men may and usually do have this faith of conviction--they may be convinced of the truth respecting Christ, and yet have no more saving faith than devils have.

But positively, faith is trust, it is depending upon Christ, relying upon him for every thing which as a Savior he promises to do for us. The soul, believing, thoroughly commits itself to God, yielding up all its interests to be disposed of according to his wisdom. More on these points soon.

III. What is implied in faith.

- 1. A realization of our actual dependence upon him. This idea of dependence must become a living idea, a practical reality to the mind, or we shall never really depend upon Christ.

This remark applies both to justification and to sanctification. As to justification, we must fully realize that without Christ we never can be pardoned and restored to a state of acceptance and justification before God. Else we shall never look to him in the gospel sense so as to receive justification unto life.

So also in respect to sanctification. Until it becomes a reality which the mind deeply feels, that we can be cleansed from sin only through faith in Christ, it is absolutely certain

that we shall never by faith take hold of those promises for life.

- 2. It implies a realizing sense of the nature and extent of our death in sin. We must see and feel that we are really dead in sin; for until we see this, we shall of course be full of self-righteous efforts. No man ever will, or ever can believe on Christ till he sees this. Why should he? He seems in his own eyes able to help himself, and nothing therefore is more natural than to prosecute self-righteous efforts until the conviction fastens upon the mind that all is hopeless and fruitless till Jesus interpose. The man must see that he is hopelessly dead in sin--as much lost beyond hope without Christ as if he were already in hell, or had been there for ages.
- 3. It implies a penetrating sense of our utter disinclination towards any good. This is indeed the same thing as being dead in sin, and is only another phraseology for the same idea.

Many who are not Christians have no just sense of this. Indeed they have no just view of God and of his law. Perhaps they think they want religion, and are inclined to embrace it. O, how deceived! They need to see their utter disinclination towards any good. Then they would see their dependence upon Christ. They would see that unless Christ interposes while they are in this state of utter disinclination, they are so utterly selfish that they never will embrace Christ for salvation. Let me ask, will an individual ever depend upon Christ, so long as he thinks himself well disposed by nature, and has no just views of his utter death in sin? No; never.

Faith then implies that we understand our utter moral impotency, and utter disinclination towards God while in an unrenewed state. When one sees this, he is prepared to see that unless a sanctifying Christ undertake for him, damnation is certain. He sees that the thing he needs to be saved from is this selfish, morally dead state of mind.

Around this point, there hangs in the views of many minds an unaccountable darkness. They do not see the very thing, to pardon and remove which they need Christ. They are feeling about after some particular sins, lying, perhaps, or theft, or Sabbath-breaking, from which they suppose they need Christ to save them. Yet, what are all these, and all such sins, but the mere bubbling up of a certain state of mind--a little of the overflowing water from that deep and vast ocean of iniquity which spreads itself all over their inner moral being? It is this state of mind--this deep sink of iniquity, the rooted selfishness in which you have accustomed yourself to live and move and have your being--this it is from which you need to be saved. This is the great thing which needs to be set right. Do you understand this? What is it that you need when your heart sighs within you for peace, and you look to religion for help? What do you need? This only--to have your disposition to sin taken away, and in its place, a disposition to serve and please God. When you come to see yourself as you are in all your relations to God and duty, you will see that your own state of mind is the very thing you need to be saved from. You will see that this is really more terrible, and more to be feared than all the devils in hell. You need not fear the mightiest devils if your own state of mind is not radically wrong.

What then are you doing? Groping about to get rid of some one or two sins as if these were all from which you need be saved? Have you not yet learned that the thing you need

first and chiefly is to be saved from a selfish state of mind, a state which is radically averse from, or enmity against God?

- 4. Another thing implied is a realization that God loves us. I mean just this--that God loves us, not the world merely and in the general sense, but ourselves in particular. The idea must come to the soul with convincing, melting power--God loves me. His pity and compassion reach even me.

Unless one understands this, how can he be penetrated with penitence, gratitude and love? No, until this idea is realized, that God is so infinitely gracious and benevolent that he has set his love on me,--until this thought comes home, the soul feels that it dare not approach him. This will be the effect just in proportion as the guilt and plague of sin are thoroughly realized. If these are deeply realized, the soul must needs realize also the great love of God, or it will fly away from the presence of God as if that presence were hell itself.

I have known men often feel as if they could fly in any direction away from God, so deeply did conscious guilt oppress them, and so terrible to their souls was the thought of meeting God. Some of you have heard me say of Father Nash that his sense of God's awful presence was such when under conviction that he would have leaped into a lake of liquid fire at once if he could have thereby escaped the presence of God.

Hence, a realization of God's love to us is essential to real trust. First, you must see your sins--and then to prevent despair, and to save you from being repelled by your own conscious guilt from the presence of God, you must apprehend his infinite love. Seeing this, the soul cries out--"after all my guilt and ill-desert, God does love me. Yes, so much has he loved me, as to give his Son to die for me. Now, I see that I may come back at once to my own Father."

Without this view of the love of God, you feel as if you could not approach God at all; but this love being seen and felt, you come sobbing back, with a heart all broken to pieces. When you see not only that God loved the world, but that he even loves you--and so loves you that he gave his own Son to die for you, then you feel yourself aroused by mighty attractions. How can you resist the melting power of such love? O, you say, what can I do for God? How can I ever praise him enough?

Such a gospel meets human want and affords an adequate remedy for human selfishness. It presents tangible points of blessed truth upon which a guilty, despairing sinner may take hold.

- 5. An apprehension of the nature as well as degree of this love is essential to, and is implied in real faith. The mind must clearly see that this love of God to us is not complacency, but compassionate benevolence.
- 6. Finally, it implies an actual dependence upon Christ in all his offices and relations. This is obvious in itself, and has been so often illustrated before you that I need not enlarge upon it

now.

REMARKS.

1. Many persons confound dependence with depending upon Christ. They talk about their dependence, without really depending upon Christ at all. Now it is one thing to say--I cannot be saved without Christ; and quite another thing actually to depend upon Christ. Father Nash used to say--I could sometimes see my dependence so clearly that I would gnash my teeth and swear and curse, daring God to do his worst; yet I was infinitely far from really depending upon Christ.

2. Faith always implies a sense of dependence, but this sense of being dependent does not always imply faith. Yet often people who talk much about dependence, have no realizing sense of the thing, and really make this talk an apology for doing nothing.

3. Many overlook the identity between depending on Christ and true faith. Let this then be ever remembered, that depending on Christ is the same thing as real faith. Real faith is a depending for justification on Christ, and on nothing else; it also in the same exclusive manner depends on Christ for sanctification. In regard to both of these blessings, real faith is a depending on Christ. We are greatly deceived if we think these are different things, for they are precisely the same thing.

We can easily understand what it is to depend on Christ, for dependence of a similar sort is a perfectly common thing in the ordinary relations of human life. One young man comes here to study. He knows that various expenses will be accruing, for board, for books, for clothing, &c. Now he has no expectation of paying these bills himself--he depends on his father to pay them for him. He is not anxious on these points; he knows very well that his father is both able and willing to do all for him that he can need.

But another young student may be here who has no father to depend on; but perhaps he looks to the church to which he belongs, as they may have pledged themselves to help him; and still another, having neither parent, nor pledged supporters to depend on, depends upon himself. He expects to labor during the terms of study, and teach in vacations.

I allude to cases of this sort to show that the idea of depending on others is perfectly familiar to all minds. We are trained into it from the very dawn of life.

Such is the Christian's depending upon Christ. To Him the Christian looks for his ceaseless supply of every want. This is faith.

4. The doctrine of human ability as it lies in many minds produces nothing else than self-confidence and self-dependence as opposed to faith. Many have such an idea of human ability that they suppose they shall readily, by dint of their own resolutions and efforts, do what God requires of them. Such an idea renders dependence on Christ morally impossible. How can he depend on Christ when he thinks he can just as well depend upon himself? It is therefore wholly indispensable to true faith that the doctrine of human ability should be in such a shape in the mind as to encourage faith,--nay, rather, as to enforce the conviction that without aid from Christ, obtained by depending on Him, we are certainly undone. In fact the idea of human ability as often apprehended, is nothing else than the spirit

of Anti-Christ. It stands directly and insuperably in the way of the soul's reliance upon Christ for the grace requisite for saving the soul from sin. Faith is forever impossible till this notion of self-sufficiency is utterly put away.

5. The doctrine of dependence, also, as it lies in some minds works mischief; for it begets a self-justifying spirit. Persons get the idea that they are in such a sense naturally unable that God cannot rationally require of them obedience. In conversation with a lady sometime since, she said, "I believe God was bound in justice to send Christ to die for sinners, and is bound now to do for sinners all that he requires them to be and to do." When she came to explain her views it appeared that she considered herself as not guilty, but only unfortunate on account of her sinful nature--unfortunate in having ever sinned at all, so as to need a Savior's atonement; unfortunate in having a state of mind so selfish and averse from God, that without gracious aid she never would accept of a Savior already provided. Hence she thought God would be unjust if he did not help her out of the troubles into which under God's universal agency she had unfortunately fallen.

After I had shown her that she had fundamentally mistaken the nature of sin, and that she could not be innocent in entertaining such views, condemned as they certainly were by her own reason and conscience, the husband said--"I have sometimes thought my wife one of the most pious of women, and again I have thought that he had no piety at all." The wife rose, and went to her chamber in a dreadful agony and conflict of mind--kept her room for two days--and then came down, all melted, subdued, transformed to the very spirit of a lamb. She no longer held God accountable for her sins, or bound in justice to give her converting grace.

6. True and deep conviction of sin is the only remedy for either of these errors. In the first case, where the man has high notions of his own ability; only let God show him his own utter wickedness, the deep and fearful depravity of his voluntarily selfish heart, and he will see that his ability is only a mountain of lead on his soul to sink it deep in the waves of damnation. Look at that sinner. Suppose God shows him just what he is doing; makes him see his own voluntary agency in sin--makes him see that he might have done good rather than evil--that God endowed him with capacities for doing all his duty; then let the Spirit of God also show him how he resists and fights against God with all his might, and make him see his own heart to be black and guilty as hell;--then see what he will say. "O," he cries, "this ability of mind is working out for me the deepest damnation. My whole heart is set upon iniquity. No other being in the universe can be so vile as I. O, surely, I am working my way down to the deepest hell."

When the Lord has thus shown him his amazing guilt, he will no longer depend on the fact of his being philosophically able to repent. He will neither deem this a meritorious thing, nor will he rely upon it for his own salvation. He will see that this ability of his has been the occasion of his meriting a deeper damnation than he otherwise could have done; and that his infatuated abuse of it is always such that he can depend on himself only to work out his own damnation.

So of the other man who makes God responsible for his own sin, for his being impenitent, and for giving him repentance. Let this man only be convicted thoroughly of his own sin, and he will no longer say--"God in justice ought to help me out." O, how he will abhor this very thought and the state of mind that can admit it for a moment! Now his mind turns upon himself in bitter

self-execrations. He sees that he has no one to condemn but himself.

7. The love of God to man is entirely consistent with his anger against sin. There is a father who finds it necessary for the best good of his child to punish him. But does this prove that the father does not love his son? By no means. He never gives a more conclusive proof of his love for his son than when his intense desire to secure his highest good is so strong as to overcome all the reluctance a father's heart feels to the infliction of pain upon a child. This is the love of real benevolence.

The same benevolent regard to the good of the rest of the family might constrain a father to punish his son, even though the hope of reclaiming him may be entirely abandoned and form no part of the motive for punishing. So God in love to the universe may punish the sinner after all hope of his being thereby reclaimed has past away forever. He may do this for the sake of a public example.

8. The love of God is of such a kind as to demand that he should abhor the wickedness of man and man on account of it.

The reason of this is obvious. This love of God is real benevolence--a sincere desire for the happiness of his creatures. But God knows perfectly well that sin necessarily and fatally destroy happiness; hence he cannot but hate it, and hate men and devils too on account of it.

9. Self-righteous men often mistake the nature of this love, supposing it to be fondness, and that it does not involve a holy and infinite abhorrence of all sin. No mistake could be greater than this.

10. It is hard for a selfish being to realize the nature of this disinterested love. This is one of the most difficult conceptions for the selfish mind to form. The reason of this difficulty is obvious. Men are naturally inclined to judge the character and motives of the Deity as they do their own, making God altogether such a being as themselves. Consequently being supremely selfish themselves, they suppose God also to be selfish. When you hear a man therefore denying that God is really benevolent, or speaking of him as if he were selfish like sinning mortals, you may know that that man is supremely selfish.

It sometimes seems impossible to make wicked men conceive of God as being truly benevolent. It is so perfectly unlike their own state of mind, they seem almost incapable of apprehending what it is, and withal are by no means very ready to admit that God is so very much better than themselves.

In the same way the sinner is prone to conceive of Christians as feeling towards him as he does towards them. He often has no idea that Christians really love him intensely, and feel the deep yearnings of compassion over him in view of his present wretchedness and coming doom. He seems to have no idea that God, angels, saints, and all the holy in earth or heaven, feel utterly different from himself.

Sometimes impenitent sinners have been broken down completely by kind treatment. Such treatment where they had reason to expect its opposite, has sometimes made the idea flash into their mind that there is real benevolence in other hearts, although there is none in their own.

Many years since I knew a man who had abused a Christian in the worst possible way. So outrageous was this abuse that on reflection he felt constrained to go and make some confession to the Christian whom he had abused. What was his amazement to find that this Christian man had not the least ill feeling towards him--had no rebukes or reproaches to utter--that he had cherished no other feelings than compassion; and now, as soon as he saw him, his benevolent heart gushed out in compassion and sympathy. O when the wicked man saw this, it brought before his mind the new and thrilling idea--It may be that God really loves me. Perhaps God too and all other holy beings are seeking my good and really care for my soul.

This is one of the most important considerations to get before the mind of any class of sinners, whether of backsliders or of those who have never professed repentance. There is a most melting power in the thought--God, my Maker and my Father, feels real and infinite compassion for me. Many a heart has bowed before God and been broken in godly sorrow under the power of this consideration.

It is a striking fact that the Bible often presents this feature of the divine character in a strong and most affecting light. "Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee." O could you who have wandered and backslidden only get this idea into your mind--could you only see how sincerely and earnestly your Maker is entreating you to return to himself--you could not refuse to come. Hear what the Psalmist said--"Has God forgotten to be gracious? and will he be favorable no more? Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Then I said, "This is my infirmity." Truly so. This is your infirmity, that you should cherish such apprehensions of God. O how can you cherish such thoughts of cold unbelief? Could you but understand how greatly God desires your return--could you see for once how deeply his compassions are awakened towards you and how cordially he would welcome you back to his bosom, it could not fail to break down all your pride, and melt your soul in penitence.

11. There is no danger that this view of the love of God should make men hard-hearted, stupid and reckless. Nothing else has such power as this to soften and melt the hearts of men. Nothing else can be compared with this to subdue rebellion; transform selfishness to benevolence, and regenerate the polluted soul into the image of God.

12. A realization of the nature and reality of the love of God is indispensable to true religion. Without this, all will be hard-hearted. Without this no one can know what it is to have an unction shed over all the soul, drawing it into deep communion with God, and awakening a calm and settled confidence in the Lord of Hosts as our own God and Father.

13. An apprehension of this needs to become an omnipresent reality, before men can be established in grace. I can testify on this point from experience. Nothing has had such an influence on my mind as this. When I go to God deeply realizing that he loves me more than I love myself, and loves to give more than I love to receive, than I feel that I may be strong in prayer and in faith. When I go to prayer for my family and can feel that God loves them more than I do--when I pray for my sick wife, and can see that God cares for her comfort and usefulness and for the interests of my family more than I possibly can, I then feel that it were cruel unbelief not to trust God for every possible good. So when I pray for Oberlin, it is good to feel that God planted this vine and he can water it at his will, and can

defend it so that the "bear out of the wood shall not waste it, nor the wild beast of the field devour it." If this vine is good for any thing in his vineyard, he values it more than I do; he loves its prosperity more, and is more ready to make efforts for sustaining and enlarging it.

Every thing in short which pertains to his kingdom, he loves more than I do. His whole being is awake to these interests--yea, more, to every body's interests,--his word having told me that he feeds even the ravens when they cry, and much more will feed his "little ones."

14. A realization of this truth is indispensable to prevalence in prayer. In order to prevail in prayer you need to realize that God loves you infinitely more than you love yourself--that He loves Zion more than you do, and loves to see sinners converted infinitely more than you ever have, or ever will. Your heart will then be strong in prayer when you see that He truly cares for you, and cares for all human happiness, so that you have no need to excite his feelings, for his soul is already on fire, all awake with most intensely glowing emotions of love, and with one changeless purpose to promote the highest happiness of every sentient being in his universe as far as he wisely can. O, to have such a God to pray to, and to come before him with these realization of his ineffable love--this quickens faith and gives vitality to the soul of prayer. Brethren, do learn how to pray to such a God as this!

Victory over the World through Faith

Lecture XVII

November 5, 1845

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Text.--1 John 5:4: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

The discussion of this text naturally leads us to make four inquiries.

I. What is it to overcome the world?

II. Who are they that overcome?

III. Why do they overcome the world?

IV. How do they do it?

These are the natural questions which a serious mind would ask upon reading this text.

I. What is it to overcome the world?

- 1. It is to get above the spirit of covetousness which possesses the men of the world. The spirit of the world is eminently the spirit of covetousness. It is a greediness after the things of the world. Some worldly men covet one thing and some another; but all classes of worldly men are living in the spirit of covetousness in some of its forms. This spirit has supreme possession of their minds.

Now the first thing in overcoming the world is, that the spirit of covetousness in respect to worldly things and objects be overcome. The man who does not overcome this spirit of bustling and scrambling after the good which this world proffers has by no means overcome it.

- 2. Overcoming the world implies rising above its engrossments. When a man has overcome the world his thoughts are no longer engrossed and swallowed up with worldly things. A man certainly does not overcome the world unless he gets above being engrossed and absorbed with its concerns.

Now we all know how exceedingly engrossed worldly men are with some form of worldly good. One is swallowed up with study; another with politics; a third with money-getting; and a fourth perhaps with fashion and with pleasure; but each in his chosen way makes earthly good the all-engrossing object.

The man who gains the victory over the world must overcome not one form only of its pursuits, but every form--must overcome the world itself and all that it has to present as an allurements to the human heart.

- 3. Overcoming the world implies overcoming the fear of the world.

It is a mournful fact that most men, and indeed all men of worldly character, have so much regard to public opinion that they dare not act according to the dictates of their consciences when acting thus would incur the popular frown. One is afraid lest his business should suffer if his course runs counter to public opinion; another fears lest if he stand up for the truth it will injure his reputation, and curiously imagines and tries to believe that advocating an unpopular truth will diminish and perhaps destroy his good influence--as if a man could exert a good influence in any possible way besides maintaining the truth.

Great multitudes, it must be admitted, are under this influence of fearing the world; yet some, perhaps many, of them are not aware of this fact. If you or if they could thoroughly sound the reasons of their backwardness in duty, fear of the world would be found among the chief. Their fear of the world's displeasure is so much stronger than their fear of God's displeasure that they are completely enslaved by it. Who does not know that some ministers dare not preach what they know is true, and even what they know is important truth, lest they should offend some whose good opinion they seek to retain? The society

is weak perhaps, and the favour of some rich man in it seems indispensable to its very existence. Hence the terror of these rich men is continually before their eyes when they write a sermon, or preach, or are called to take a stand in favour of any truth or cause which may be unpopular with men of more wealth than piety or conscience. Alas! this bondage to man! Too many gospel ministers are so troubled by it that their time-serving policy is virtually renouncing Christ and serving the world.

Overcoming the world is thoroughly subduing this servility to men.

- 4. Overcoming the world implies overcoming a state of worldly anxiety. You know there is a state of great carefulness and anxiety which is common and almost universal among worldly men. It is perfectly natural if the heart is set upon securing worldly good, and has not learned to receive all good from the hand of a great Father and trust him to give or withhold with his own unerring wisdom. But he who loves the world is the enemy of God and hence can never have this filial trust in a parental Benefactor, nor the peace of soul which it imparts. Hence worldly men are almost incessantly in a fever of anxiety lest their worldly schemes should fail. They sometimes get a momentary relief when all things seem to go well; but some mishap is sure to befall them at some point soon, so that scarce a day passes that brings not with it some corroding anxiety. Their bosoms are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

But the man who gets above the world gets above this state of ceaseless and corroding anxiety.

- 5. The victory under consideration implies that we cease to be enslaved and in bondage to the world in any of its forms.

There is a worldly spirit and there is also a heavenly spirit, and one or the other exists in the heart of every man and controls his whole being. Those who are under the control of the world of course have not overcome the world. No man overcomes the world till his heart is imbued with the spirit of heaven.

One form which the spirit of the world assumes is, being enslaved to the customs and fashions of the day.

It is marvelous to see what a goddess Fashion becomes. No heathen goddess was ever worshipped with costlier offerings or more devout homage or more implicit subjection. And surely no heathen deity since the world began has ever had more universal patronage. Where will you go to find the man of the world or the woman of the world who does not hasten to worship at her shrine?

But overcoming the world implies that the spell of this goddess is broken.

They who have overcome the world are no longer careful either to secure its favour or avert its frown; and the good or the ill opinion of the world is to them a small matter. "To me," said Paul, "it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment." So of every real

Christian; his care is to secure the approbation of God; this is his chief concern, to commend himself to God and to his own conscience. No man has overcome the world unless he has attained this state of mind.

Almost no feature of Christian character is more striking or more decisive than this--indifference to the opinions of the world.

Since I have been in the ministry I have been blessed with the acquaintance of some men who were peculiarly distinguished by this quality of character. Some of you may have known Rev. James Patterson, late of Philadelphia. If so, you know him to have been eminently distinguished in this respect. He seemed to have the least possible disposition to secure the applause of men or avoid their censure. It seemed to be of no consequence to him to commend himself to men. For him it was enough if he might please God.

Hence you were sure to find him in everlasting war against sin, all sin, however popular, however entrenched by custom or sustained by wealth, or public opinion. Yet he always opposed sin with a most remarkable spirit--a spirit of inflexible decision and yet of great mellowness and tenderness. While he was saying the most severe things in the most decided language, you might see the big tears rolling down his cheeks.

It is wonderful that most men never complained of his having a bad spirit. Much as they dreaded his rebuke and writhed under his strong and daring exposures of wickedness, they could never say that Father Patterson had any other than a good spirit. This was a most beautiful and striking exemplification of having overcome the world.

Men who are not thus dead to the world have not escaped its bondage. The victorious Christian is in a state where he is no longer in bondage to man. He is bound only to serve God.

II. We must enquire Who are those that overcome the world?

Our text gives the ready answer: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." You cannot fail to observe that this is a universal proposition,--all who are born of God overcome the world--all these, and it is obviously implied-- none others. You may know who are born of God by this characteristic--they overcome the world. Of course the second question is answered.

III. Our next question is, Why do believers overcome the world? On what principle is this result effected?

I answer, this victory over the world results as naturally from the spiritual or heavenly birth, as coming into bondage to the world results from the natural birth.

It may be well to revert a moment to the law of connection in the latter case, viz., between coming into the world by natural birth and bondage to the world. This law obviously admits of a philosophical explanation, at once simple and palpable to every one's observation. Natural birth reveals to the mind objects of sense and these only. It brings the mind into contact with worldly things. Of course it is

natural that the mind should become deeply interested in these objects thus presented through its external senses, especially as most of them sustain so intimate a relation to our sentient nature and become the first and chief sources of our happiness.

Hence our affections are gradually entwined around these objects, and we become thoroughly lovers of this world ere our eyes have been opened upon it many months.

Now alongside of this universal fact let another be placed of equal importance and not less universal, namely, that those intuitive powers of the mind which were created to take cognizance of our moral relations, and hence to counteract the too great influence of worldly objects, come into action very slowly, and are not developed so as to act vigorously until years are numbered as months are in the case of the external organs of sense. The very early and vigorous development of the latter brings the soul so entirely under the control of worldly objects that when the reason and the conscience come to speak, their voice is little heeded. As a matter of fact, we find it universally true that unless divine power interpose, the bondage to the world thus induced upon the soul is never broken.

But the point which I particularly desired to elucidate was simply this, that natural birth with its attendant laws of physical and mental development, becomes the occasion of bondage to this world.

Right over against this, lies the birth into the kingdom of God by the Spirit. By this the soul is brought into new relations--we might rather say, into intimate contact with spiritual things. The Spirit of God seems to usher the soul into the spiritual world, in a manner strictly analogous to the result of the natural birth upon our physical being. The great truths of the spiritual world are opened to our view through the illumination of the Spirit of God; we seem to see with new eyes, and to have a new world of spiritual objects around us.

As in regard to natural objects, men not only speculate about them, but realize them; so in the case of spiritual children do spiritual things become not merely matters of speculation, but of full and practical realization also. When God reveals himself to the mind, spiritual things are seen in their real light, and make the impression of realities.

Consequently, when spiritual objects are thus revealed to the mind, and thus apprehended, they will supremely interest that mind. Such is our mental constitution that the truth of God when thoroughly apprehended cannot fail to interest us. If these truths were clearly revealed to the wickedest man on earth, so that he should apprehend them as realities, it could not fail to rouse up his soul to most intense action. He might hate the light, and might stubbornly resist the claims of God upon his heart, but he could not fail to feel a thrilling interest in truths that so take hold of the great and vital things of human well-being.

Let me ask, is there a sinner in this house, or can there be a sinner on this wide earth, who does not see that if God's presence was made as manifest and as real to his mind as the presence of his fellow-men, it would supremely engross his soul even though it might not subdue his heart.

This revelation of God's presence and character might not convert him, but it would, at least for the time being, kill his attention to the world.

You often see this in the case of persons deeply convicted; you have doubtless seen persons so fearfully convicted of sin, that they cared nothing at all for their food nor their dress. O, they cried out in the agony of their souls, what matter all these things to us, if we even get them all, and then must be down in hell!

But these thrilling and all-absorbing convictions do not necessarily convert the soul, and I have alluded to them here only to show the controlling power of realizing views of divine truth.

When real conversion has taken place, and the soul is born of God, then realizing views of truth not only awaken interest, as they might do in an unrenewed mind, but they also tend to excite a deep and ardent love for these truths. They draw out the heart. Spiritual truth now takes possession of his mind, and draws him into its warm and life-giving embrace. Before, error, falsehood, death, had drawn him under their power; now the Spirit of God draws him into the very embrace of God. Now he is begotten of God, and breathes the spirit of sonship. Now, according to the Bible, "the seed of God remaineth in him," that very truth, and those movings, of the spirit which gave him birth into the kingdom of God, continue still in power upon his mind, and hence he continues a Christian, and as the Bible states it, "he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The seed of God is in him, and the fruit of it brings his soul deeply into sympathy with his own Father in heaven.

Again, the first birth makes us acquainted with earthly things, the second with God; the first with the finite, the second with the infinite; the first with things correlated with our animal nature, the second with those great things which stand connected with our spiritual nature, things so lovely, and so glorious as to overcome all the ensnarements of the world.

Again, the first begets a worldly, and the second a heavenly temper, under the first, the mind is brought into a snare--under the second, it is delivered from that snare. Under the first, the conversation is earthly--under the second, "our conversation is in heaven."

But we must pass to inquire,

IV. How this victory over the world is achieved.

The great agent is the Holy Spirit. Without him, no good result is ever achieved in the Christian's heart or life.

The text, you observe, says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." But here the question might be raised: Does this mean that faith of itself overcomes the world, or, is this the meaning, that we overcome by or through our faith? Doubtless the latter is the precise meaning. Believing in God, and having realizing impressions of his truth and character made upon our mind by the Holy Ghost given to those who truly believe, we gain the victory over the world.

Faith implies three things.

1. Perception of truth.

2. An interest in it.

3. The committal or giving up of the mind to be interested and controlled by these objects of faith.

Perception of the truth must come first in order, for there can be no belief of unknown and unperceived truth. Next, there must be an interest in the truth, which shall wake up the mind to fixed and active attention; and thirdly, there must be a voluntary committal of the mind to the control of truth. The mind must wholly yield itself up to God, to be governed entirely by his will, and to trust him and him alone as its own present and eternal portion.

Again, faith receives Christ. The mind first perceives Christ's character and his relations to us--sees what he does for us, and then deeply feeling its own need of such a Saviour, and of such a work wrought in and for us as Jesus alone can do, it goes forth to receive and embrace Jesus as its own Saviour. This action of the soul in receiving and embracing Christ is not sluggish--it is not a state of dozing quietism. No; it involves the soul's most strenuous activity. And this committal of the soul must become a glorious, living, energizing principle--the mind not only perceiving, but yielding itself up with the most fervid intensity to be Christ's and to receive all the benefits of His salvation into our own souls.

Again, faith receives Christ into the soul as King, in all his relations, to rule over the whole being--to have our heart's supreme confidence and affection--to receive the entire homage of our obedience and adoration; to rule, in short, over us, and fulfil all the functions of supreme King over our whole moral being. Within our very souls we receive Christ to live and energize there, to reign forever there as on His own rightful throne.

Now a great many seem to stop short of this entire and perfect committal of their whole soul to Christ. They stop short perhaps with merely perceiving the truth, satisfied and pleased that they have learned the theory of the gospel. Or perhaps some go one step further, and stop with being interested--with having their feelings excited by the things of the gospel, thus going only to the second stage; or perhaps they seem to take faith, but not Christ; they think to believe, but after all do not cordially, and with all the heart welcome Christ himself into the soul.

All these various steps stop short of really taking hold of Christ. They none of them result in giving the victory over the world.

The true Bible doctrine of faith represents Christ as coming into the very soul. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." What could more forcibly and beautifully teach the doctrine that by faith Christ is introduced into the very soul of the believer to dwell there by His gracious presence?

Since my mind has been drawn to the subject, I have been astonished to see how long I have been in a purblind state of perception in respect to this particular view of faith. Of a long time I had scarcely seen it; now I see it beaming forth in lines of glory on almost every page. The Bible seems to blaze with the glorious truth, Christ in the soul, the hope of glory; God, Christ, dwelling in our body as in a temple. I am amazed that a truth so rich and so blessed should have been seen so dimly, when the

Bible reveals it so plainly. Christ received into the very soul by faith, and thus brought into the nearest possible relations to our heart and life;--Christ himself becoming the all-sustaining Power within us, and thus securing the victory over the world;--Christ, living and energizing in our hearts--this is the great central truth in the plan of sanctification, and this no Christian should fail to understand, as he values the victory over the world and the living communion of the soul with its Maker.

REMARKS.

1. It is in the very nature of the case impossible that if faith receive Christ into the soul, it should not overcome the world. If the new birth actually brings the mind into this new state, and brings Christ into the soul, then of course Christ will reign in that soul; the supreme affections will be yielded most delightfully to him, and the power of the world over that mind will be broken. Christ cannot dwell in any soul without absorbing the supreme interest of that soul. And this is of course equivalent to giving the victory over the world.

2. He who does not habitually overcome the world is not born of God. In saying this, I do not intend to affirm that a true Christian may not sometimes be overcome by sin; but I do affirm that overcoming the world is the general rule, and falling into sin is only the exception. This is the least that can be meant by the language of our text, and by similar declarations which often occur in the Bible. Just as in the passage--"He that is born of God doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin because he is born of God,"--nothing less can be meant than this--that he cannot sin uniformly--cannot make sinning his business, and can sin, if at all, only occasionally and aside from the general current of his life. In the same manner we should say of a man who is in general truthful, that he is not a liar.

I will not contend for more than this respecting either of these passages; but for so much as this I must contend, that the new-born souls here spoken of do in general overcome the world. The general fact respecting them is that they do not sin and are not in bondage to Satan. The affirmations of Scripture respecting them must at least embrace their general character.

3. What is a religion good for that does not overcome the world? What is the benefit of being born into such a religion, if it leave the world still swaying its dominion over our hearts? What avails a new birth which after all fails to bring us into a likeness to God, into the sympathies of his family and of his kingdom; which leaves us still in bondage to the world and to Satan? What can there be of such a religion more than the name? With what reason can any man suppose that such a religion fits his heart for heaven, supposing it leaves him earthly-minded, sensual, and selfish.

4. We see why it is that infidels have proclaimed the gospel of Christ to be a failure. You may not be aware that of late infidels have taken the ground that the gospel of Christ is a failure. They maintain that it professes to bring men out from the world, but fails to do so; and hence is manifestly a failure. Now you must observe that the Bible does indeed affirm, as infidels say, that those who are truly born of God do overcome the world. This we cannot deny and should not wish to deny it. Now if the infidel can show that the new birth fails to produce this result, he has carried his point, and we must yield ours. This is perfectly plain, and there can be no escape for us.

But the infidel is in fault in his premises. He assumes the current Christianity of the age as a specimen

of real religion, and builds his estimate upon this. He proves, as he thinks, and perhaps truly proves that the current Christianity does not overcome the world.

We must demur to his assuming this current Christianity as real religion. For this religion of the mass of nominal professors does not answer the descriptions given of true piety in the Word of God. And moreover, if this current type of religion were all that the gospel and the Divine Spirit can do for lost man, then we might as well give up the point in controversy with the infidel; for such a religion could not give us much evidence of coming from God, and would be of very little value to man;--so little as scarcely to be worth contending for. Truly if we must take the professedly Christian world as Bible Christians, who would not be ashamed and confounded in attempting to confront the infidel? We know but too well that the great mass of professed Christians do not overcome the world, and we should be confounded quickly if we were to maintain that they do. Those professed Christians themselves know that they do not overcome the world. Of course they could not testify concerning themselves that in their own case the power of the gospel is exemplified.

In view of facts like these, I have often been astonished to see ministers setting themselves to persuade their people that they are really converted, trying to lull their fears and sustain their tottering hopes. Vain effort! Those same ministers, it would seem, must know that they themselves do not overcome the world, and equally well must they know that their people do not. How fatal then to the soul must be such efforts to "heal the hurt of God's professed people slightly; crying peace, peace, when there is no peace!"

Let us sift this matter to the bottom, pushing the inquiry--Do the great mass of professed Christians really overcome the world? It is a fact beyond question that with them the things of this world are the realities, and the things of God are mere theories. Who does not know that this is the real state of great multitudes in the nominal Church?

Let the searching inquiry run through this congregation--What are those things that set your soul on fire--that stir up your warmest emotions and deeply agitate your nervous system? Are these the things of earth, or the things of heaven? the things of time, or the things of eternity? the things of self, or the things of God?

How is it when you go into your closets?--do you go there to seek and find God? Do you in fact find there a present God, and do you hold communion there as friend with friend? How is this?

Now you certainly should know that if your state is such that spiritual things are mere theories and speculations, you are altogether worldly and nothing more. It would be egregious folly and falsehood to call you spiritual-minded, and for you to think yourselves spiritual, would be the most fatal and foolish self-deception. You give none of the appropriate proofs of being born of God. Your state is not that of one who is personally acquainted with God, and who loves him personally with supreme affection.

5. Until we can put away from the minds of men the common error that the current Christianity of the Church is true Christianity, we can make but little progress in converting the world. For in the first place we cannot save the Church itself from bondage to the world in this life, nor from the direst

doom of the hypocrite in the next. We cannot unite and arm the Church in vigorous onset upon Satan's kingdom, so that the world may be converted to God. We cannot even convince intelligent men of the world that our religion is from God, and brings to fallen men a remedy for their depravity. For if the common Christianity of the age is the best that can be, and this does not give men the victory over the world, what is it good for? And if it really is of little worth or none, how can we hope to make thinking men prize it as of great value?

6. There are but very few infidels who are as much in the dark as they profess to be on these points. There are very few of that class of men who are not acquainted with some humble Christians, whose lives commend Christianity and condemn their own ungodliness. Of course they know the truth, that there is a reality in the religion of the Bible, and they blind their own eyes selfishly and most foolishly when they try to believe that the religion of the Bible is a failure and that the Bible is therefore a fabrication. Deep in their heart lies the conviction that here and there are men who are real Christians, who overcome the world and live by a faith unknown to themselves. In how many cases does God set some burning examples of Christian life before those wicked, skeptical men, to rebuke them for their sin and their skepticism--perhaps their own wife or their children, their neighbours or their servants. By such means the truth is lodged in their mind, and God has a witness for himself in their consciences.

I have perhaps before mentioned a fact which occurred at the South, and was stated to me by a minister of the gospel who was acquainted with the circumstances of the case. There resided in that region a very worldly and a most ungodly man, who held a great slave property, and was withal much given to horse-racing. Heedless of all religion and avowedly skeptical, he gave full swing to every evil propensity. But wicked men must one day see trouble; and this man was taken sick and brought to the very gates of the grave. His weeping wife and friends gather round his bed, and begin to think of having some Christian called in to pray for the dying man's soul. Husband, said the anxious wife, shall I not send for our minister to pray with you before you die? No, said he, I know him of old; I have no confidence in him; I have seen him too many times at horse-races; there he was my friend and I was his; but I don't want to see him now.

But who shall we get, then? continued the wife. Send for my slave Tom, replied he; he is one of my hostlers. I have often overheard him praying and I know he can pray; besides I have watched his life and his temper, and I never saw anything in him inconsistent with Christian character;--call him in, I should be glad to hear him pray.

Tom comes slowly and modestly in, drops his hat at the door, looks on his sick and dying master;--Tom, said the dying skeptic,--do you ever pray? do you know how to pray? can you pray for your dying master and forgive him? O yes, massa, with all my heart; and drops on his knees and pours out a prayer for his soul.

Now the moral of this story is obvious. Place the skeptic on his dying bed, let that solemn hour arrive, and the inner convictions of his heart be revealed, and he knows of at least one man who is a Christian. He knows one man whose prayers he values more than all the friendship of all his former associates. He knows now that there is such a thing as Christianity; and yet you cannot suppose that he has this moment learned a lesson he never knew before. No, he knew just as much before; an

honest hour has brought the inner convictions of his soul to light. Infidels generally know more than they have honesty enough to admit.

7. The great error of those who profess religion but are not born of God is this:--they are trying to be Christians without being born of God. They need to have that done to them which is said of Adam--"God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Their religion has in it none of the breath of God: it is a cold, lifeless theory; there is none of the living vitality of God in it. It is perhaps a heartless orthodoxy, and they may take a flattering unction to their hearts that their creed is sound; but do they love that truth which they profess to believe? They think, it may be, that they have zeal, and that their zeal is right and their heart right; but is their soul on fire for God and his cause? Where are they, and what are they doing? Are they spinning out some fond theory, or defending it at the point of the sword? Ah, do they care for souls? Does their heart tremble for the interests of Zion? Do their very nerves quiver under the mighty power of God's truth? Does their love for God and for souls set their orthodoxy and their creeds on fire so that every truth burns in their souls and glows forth from their very faces? If so, then you will not see them absent from the prayer meetings and from the class meetings; but you will see that divine things take hold of their soul with overwhelming interest and power. You will see them living Christians, burning and shining lights in the world. Brethren, it cannot be too strongly impressed on every mind that the decisive characteristic of true religion is energy, not apathy: that its vital essence is life not death.

GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.

3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.

End of the 1845 Collection.