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# "The Oberlin Evangelist"

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by

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## GLOSSARY

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

# The Doom Of Those Who Neglect The Great Salvation

Lecture I

January 20, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Hebrews 2:3: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Escape what? What can Universalists say to such a question as this? They whose first doctrine proclaims that there can be no danger -- what will they say to this solemn question and its startling assumption of peril from which there shall be no escape? How shall we escape? -- says the inspired author -- as if he would imply most strongly that there can be no escape to those who neglect this great salvation.

Salvation; -- the very term imports safety or deliverance from great impending evil. If there be no such evil, there is then no meaning to this term -- no real salvation.

*I. The salvation published in the gospel; and the greatness of its Author and Revealer.*

*II. The greatness of this salvation in many other points of view.*

*III. The language used in the Bible to describe the sinner's future woe is very terrible.*

*IV. What is to be regarded as fatal neglect?*

*V. What is effectual attention?*

**I. The writer is speaking of the salvation published in the gospel; and the idea that immediately suggested its greatness is the greatness of its Author and Revealer.**

- 1. It is because Jesus Christ by whom this gospel came is so great, compared with angels, that the writer conceives of this salvation as pre-eminently great and glorious.
- 2. This second chapter is closely connected with the first. The train of thought reverts to the fact that God had anciently spoken to their fathers by the prophets; but in these last days, by His Son -- the very brightness of His own glory -- the Upholder of all things, shown all through the Bible to be higher than angels, through whose ministrations also, the Divine word had sometimes come to mortals. Now then, since the word so revealed by angels, carried with it the sternest authority, and every sort of transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall men escape who neglect a salvation so great that even God's glorious Son

is sent from heaven to earth to reveal it! He, the Exalted Son, came down to create and reveal this salvation; He wrought it out in death, confirming His divine mission while He lived, by miracles; must it not, then be a matter of supreme importance?

**II. Yet the Bible has not left us to infer its greatness from the glory of its Author alone; it presents to us the greatness of this salvation in many other points of view.**

- 1. It is great in its very nature. It is salvation from death in sin.

Let men talk and gainsay as they will, this one great fact is given us by human consciousness -- that men are dead in sin. Every man knows this. We all know that apart from God's quickening Spirit, we have no heart to love God. Each sinner knows that, whatever may be his power as a mortal agent, yet, left to himself, there is in him a moral weakness that effectually shuts him off from salvation, save as God interposes with efficient help. Hence the salvation that meets him in this weakness and turns him effectually to love and to please God, must be intrinsically great.

- 2. Again, it is great because it delivers from endless sinning and suffering.

Just think of that: endless suffering. How long could you bear even the slightest degree of pain -- supposing it to continue without intermission? How long ere you would find it unendurable? Experiments in this matter often surprise us -- such for example as the incessant fall of single drops of water upon the head -- a kind of torture sometimes inflicted on slaves. The first drops are scarcely noticed; but ere long the pain becomes excruciating, and ultimately unendurable.

Just think of any kind of suffering which goes on ever increasing! Suppose it to increase constantly for one year; would you not think this to be awful? Suppose it to increase without remission for one hundred years -- can you estimate the fearful amount? What then must it be if it goes on increasing forever!

- 3. It matters not how rapid or how slow this increase -- the amount, if its duration be eternal, must be ineffably appalling! Nor does it matter much how great or how little the degree at the outset; suppose it ever so small, yet eternal growth must make it beyond measure appalling! You may suppose the amount of woe endured to be represented by one drop for the first thousand years; yet let it increase for the next thousand, and yet more for the next, and ere eternity shall have rolled away, the amount will be an ocean! It would take a great while to fill up such an ocean as the Atlantic by giving it one drop in each thousand years -- yet time would fill it; it would take yet longer to fill the Pacific at the same rate -- but time would suffice to fill it; more time would fill up the Indian ocean; more yet would cover this globe; more would fill all the vast space between us and the fixed stars; but even this lapse of time would not exhaust eternity. It would not even begin to measure eternal duration! How fearful then must be that woe which knows no limit save eternity!
- 4. Some deny the sufferings of the wicked to be penal inflictions, and insist that they are only the natural consequence of sinning. I shall not stop now to enter upon any argument on this

point; but I ask, what difference does that make as to the amount or endurableness of eternal woe? Penal or not penal, the Bible represents it as eternal, and its very nature shows that it must be forever increasing; how then can it be essentially lessened by the question whether it be or be not penal infliction? Whether God has so constituted all moral agents that their sin -- allowed to work out its legitimate results -- will entail misery enough to answer all those fearful descriptions given us in the Bible, or whether in addition to all that misery, God inflicts yet more, penally, and this enlarged amount makes up the eternal doom denounced on the finally wicked, it surely can be of small consequence to decide, so far forth as amount of suffering is concerned.

- 5. Some deny that the cause of this suffering is material fire. They may even scoff at this and think that by so doing, they have extinguished the flames of hell, and have thus annihilated all future punishment. How vain! Can a sinner's scoff frustrate the Almighty? Did the Almighty God ever lack means to execute His word? What matters is whether the immediate agent in the sinner's sufferings be fire or something else of which fire is the fittest emblem? Can your scoffs make it any the less fearful?

This fearful woe is the fruit of sinning; and is therefore inevitable, save as you desist from sinning while yet mercy may be found. Once in hell, you will know that, while you continue to sin, you must continue to suffer.

### **III. The language used in the Bible to describe the sinner's future woe is very terrible.**

- 1. We may call it figurative. I suppose those germs to be figures of speech, but I cannot tell. I have never been there. If anyone here has been, let him speak.
- 2. It certainly may be literal fire. No one of us can certainly know that it is not. It must be something equal to fire; for we cannot suppose that God would deceive us. Whoever else may speak extravagantly, God never does! He never puts forth great swelling words of vanity -- sounding much, but meaning little. Take it then which way you please, it is an awful revelation -- to die in your sins; to go away into a furnace of fire -- to be among those, the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up forever and ever! How strikingly is this doom symbolized in the smoke of those doomed cities of the plain, "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire!" Their "smoke ascended as the smoke of a great furnace." Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw it! What sort of a night did he spend after that appalling scene? He had risen early -- had made his way through the morning dew to the hill-top overlooking Sodom, and then he saw the smoke of those doomed cities ascending to heaven. So may the Christian parent perhaps wend his way to the hill-tops of the heavenly city and look over into the great pit, where the ungodly weep and wail forevermore! Shall it be that any of your unsaved children will be deep in that pit of woe?
- 3. Observe again, this salvation is not merely negative -- a salvation from sin and from suffering: it has also a positive side. On this positive side, it includes perfect holiness and endless blessedness. It is not only deliverance from never-ending and ever-accumulating woe; it is also endless bliss -- exceeding in both kind and degree, all we can conceive in this life. This is not the world to realize the full bliss of unalloyed purity. There will be sin around us; there

will yet be some sad traces of it within us. Yet who of us does not sometimes catch a distinct view of that purity and blessedness which we know reigns in heaven? Most blessed views there are, yet no doubt dim and weak, compared with the great reality. When that bliss shall be perfect -- when nothing more is left us to desire, but every desire of our soul is filled to its utmost capacity, and we shall have the full assurance that this blessedness must increase with the expansion of our powers and with our advance in knowledge as we gaze with ever growing interest into the works of the great God; this will be heaven! All this is only one side -- the positive side of that blessedness which comes with this great salvation.

Now set yourselves to balance these two things one against the other; an ever-growing misery and an ever-growing blessedness. Find some measuring line by which you can compare them.

You may recall the figure I have more than once mentioned here. An old writer says -- Suppose a little bird is set to remove this globe by taking from it one grain of sand at a time, and to come only once in a thousand years. She takes her first grain and away she flies on her long and weary course, and long, long, are the days ere she returns again. It will doubtless seem to many as if she never would return; but when a thousand years have rolled away, she comes panting back for one more grain of sand -- and this globe is again lessened by just one grain of its almost countless sands. So the work goes on. So eternity wears away -- only it does not exhaust itself a particle. That little bird will one day have finished her task and the last sand will have been taken away, but even then eternity will have only begun. Its sands are never to be exhausted. One would suppose that the angels would become so old, so hoary with the weight of centuries, and every being so old, they would be weary of life, but this supposing only shows that we are judging of the effects of time in that eternal state by its observed effect in this transient world. But we fail to consider that God made this world for a transient life -- that for one that shall never pass away.

Taking up again our figure of the little bird removing the sands of our globe, we may extend it, and suppose that after she had finished this world, she takes up successfully the other planets in our system -- Mercury, and Nevis, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Herschel, each and all on the same law -- one grain each thousand years, and when these are all exhausted, then the sun, and then each of the fixed stars; until the hundreds of thousands of those stupendous orbs are all removed and gone. But even then eternity is not exhausted. We have not yet even an approximation towards its end. End? There is no end! That poor old bird makes progress. Though exceedingly slow, she will one day have done her appointed task. But she will not even then have come any nearer to the end of eternity! Eternity! Who can compute it? No finite mind; and yet this idea is not fiction, but sober fact. There is no possible room for mistake -- no ground for doubt.

Moreover, no truth can be more entirely and intensely practical than this. Everyone of us here -- every one of all our families, every child -- all these students -- are included. It concerns us all. Before us, each and all, lies this eternal state of our being. We are all to live in this eternal state. There awaits us there either woe or bliss, without measure and beyond all our powers of computation. If woe, it will be greater than all finite minds can

conceive. Suppose all the minds ever created were to devote their powers to compute this suffering -- to find some adequate measure that shall duly represent it; alas, they could not even begin! Neither could they any better find measures to contain the bliss on the other hand, of those who are truly the children of God. All the most expressive language of our race would say -- It is not in me to measure infinite bliss or infinite woe; all the figures within the grasp of all created imaginations would fade away before the stupendous undertaking! Yet this infinite bliss and endless woe are the plain teaching of the Bible, and are in harmony with the decisive affirmations of the human reason. We know, that if we continue in sin, the misery must come upon us; -- if we live and die in holiness, the bliss will come.

And is this the theme, and are these the great facts which these young men may be abroad to the ends of the world and proclaim to every creature, and which these young women also may speak of everywhere in the society where they move? Truly they have a glorious and sublime message to bear!

Again, suppose the joy resulting from this salvation to be a mild form of peace and quiet of soul. We may suppose this, although we cannot forget that the Bible represents it as being a "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" but suppose it were only a mild quiet joy. Even then an eternal accumulation of it -- a prolongation of it during eternal ages, considering also that naturally it must forever increase -- will amount to an infinite joy. Indeed it matters little how small the unit with which you start, yet let there be given an eternal duration, coupled with ceaseless growth and increase, and how vast the amount!

- 4. According to the Bible, this blessedness of the holy is the full fruition of God's love. Hence the bliss which it involves can be nothing short of infinite. It can have no limit. A really comprehensive view of what it will be would be overpowering. Who of you could bear the view of your future selves? Could you who are saints? Suppose you could see yourselves as you will exist ten thousand years hence. Suppose you were for a moment endowed with the power to penetrate the future and see yourself as you will be before the throne of God. If you were not apprised that it is yourself, you might fall down and worship!
- 5. Or suppose the wicked could see their future selves as they will be ten thousand years hence -- could see how full of torment they will be, and what unutterable woes their souls shall bear there; could they endure the sight?

And here does some one say -- How very extravagant you are! Extravagant? Nothing can be farther from the truth than to hold these views to be extravagant. For, grant only immortality, and all that I have said must follow of necessity. Let it be admitted that the soul exists forever, and not a word that I have said is too much. Indeed, when you carry out that great fact to its legitimate results under the moral government of God, all these descriptions seem exceedingly flat -- they fall so very far short of the truth.

- 6. In the next place let it be considered that neglect of this great salvation is fatal. So our text most emphatically implies -- so the Bible often elsewhere most unqualifiedly affirms. No sinner, therefore, need go about to weary himself to commit iniquity -- as if he would fain make sure

his doom; for mere neglect is fatal. What more should he want?

#### **IV. But let us enquire -- What is to be regarded as fatal neglect?**

For all have at some time been guilty of some neglect.

#### **V. We shall reach the true answer to our question by asking another; viz. -- What is effectual attention?**

Plainly that and only that which ensures gospel repentance and faith in Christ. Only that which ensures personal holiness and thus, final salvation. That is therefore effectual attention which arouses the soul thoroughly to take hold of Jesus Christ as the offered Savior. To fall short of this is fatal neglect. You may have many good things about you -- may make many good resolves and hopeful efforts; yet failing in this main thing, you fail utterly.

#### **REMARKS.**

1. You need only be a little less than fully in earnest, and you will certainly fall short of salvation. You may have a good deal of feeling and a hopeful earnestness, but if you are only less than fully in earnest, you will surely fail. The work will not be done. You are guilty of fatal neglect, for you have never taken the decisive step. Who of you is he that is a little less than fully in earnest? You are the one who will weary yourself for nought and in vain. You must certainly fall short of salvation.

2. It must be great folly to do anything short of effectual effort. Many are just enough in earnest to deceive themselves. They pay just enough attention to this subject to get hold of it wrong, and do only just enough to fall short of salvation, and go down to death with a lie in their right hand. If they were to stay away from all worship; it would shock them. Now, they go to the assemblies of God's people and do many things hopeful; but after all, they fall short of entering in at the door into Christ's fold. What folly is this! Why should any of you do this foolish thing? This doing only just enough to deceive yourself and others, is the very course to please Satan. Nothing else could so completely serve his ends. He knows very well that where the gospel is generally understood, he must not preach infidelity openly, not Universalism, nor Atheism. Neither would do. But if he can just keep you along, doing little less than enough, he is sure of his man. He wants to see you holding fast to a false hope. Then he knows you are the greatest possible stumbling-block, and are doing the utmost you can to ruin the souls of men.

3. This salvation is life's great work. If not made such, it had best be left alone. To put it in any other relation is worse than nothing. If you make it second to anything else, your course will surely be ineffectual -- a lie, a delusion, a damnation!

Are you giving your attention effectually to this great subject? Who of you are? Have you this testimony in your own conscience, that you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? And have you become acquainted with Christ? Do you know Him as your Life and your Hope? Have you the joy and the peace of believing? Can you give to yourself and to others a really satisfactory reason for the hope that is in you?

This is life's great work -- the great work of earth; and now, in whom of you is it effectually begun? You cannot do it at all without a thorough and right beginning. I am jealous of some of you that you have not begun right -- that you have mistaken conviction for conversion. Like some of Bunyan's characters, I fear you have clambered over the wall into the palace, and did not come in by the gate. Do you ask me why I fear this of you? I will answer only by asking a question back. Don't you think I have reason to fear it? Have you the consciousness of being pure in heart, and of growing purer? Do you plan everything with reference to this great work of salvation? What are the ways of life that you have marked out for yourself? And on what principle have you shaped them? On what subjects are you most sensitive? What most thoroughly awakens your sensibility? If there is a prayer-meeting to pray for the salvation of sinners, are you there? Is your heart there?

4. It is infinite folly to make the matter of personal salvation, only a secondary matter; for to do so is only to neglect it after all. Unless it has your whole heart, you virtually neglect it, for nothing less than your whole heart is the devotion due. To give it less than your whole heart is truly to insult God, and to insult the subject of salvation.

What shall we think of those who seem never to make any progress at all? Is it not very plain that they give much less than their whole hearts to this matter? It is most certain that if they gave their whole hearts intelligently to it, they would make progress -- would speedily find their way to Christ. To make no progress is therefore a decisive indication of having no real heart in this pursuit. How can such escape, seeing they neglect so great salvation?

## **The Treasure And The Pearl**

Lecture II

March 31, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Matt. 13:44-46: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Here we have two parables to illustrate manifestly one idea. It first compares the kingdom of heaven to treasure hid in a field, which a man, having found, sells all he has and buys it. The second gives us the case of a merchant-man seeking choice pearls, who, having found one of very great value, sells all he has and buys it.



What do this treasure and this pearl represent?

Jesus Christ, beyond a doubt. The parables are intended to show how it is in the kingdom of God. When Christ is really found, He charms the soul away from every thing else.

*I. What is implied in finding Christ, this great treasure?*

*II. What are the conditions under which Christ may be thus seen and found?*

*III. To notice, in greater detail, the results of thus finding Christ.*

### **I. Here we must enquire first -- What is implied in finding Christ, this great treasure?**

- 1. It is plain that the very idea of finding a treasure and being appropriately affected thereby, implies that the finder appreciates its value. Applying this obvious fact to the finding of Christ, it is plain that men may learn something about Him in the merely speculative sense, and be none the wiser or richer, for they may, in their hearts, reject Him, despite of such knowledge. To find Christ, therefore, in the true sense, cannot be a merely historical finding, or a theological, or a doctrinal finding. In fact, men have often found Christ in these speculative senses, without being led thereby to sell all to buy Him. In the merely historical sense, Christ may be found without any such result, as these parables indicate.

Again, I remark -- In these parables, Christ teaches not only how things ought to be, but how they are -- the actual results of this finding. The repetition in a second parable, reveals His earnestness in inculcating these ideas.

- 2. It is plain that the finding of Christ in this sense is very much misunderstood. If, in fact, men who really find Christ, sell all that they have, it must be that this finding has taken strong hold of the soul.
- 3. It must imply a spiritual apprehension of Christ, reaching to His real nature. The mind must apprehend Him as more than a mere man who lived, died, and went to heaven. It must require something more than these views of Christ, to produce the results given in our text. He might have lived and died as the first and greatest of martyrs, and yet, even so, none of these emphatic results would follow. But, plainly, the soul must understand Christ in a truly spiritual sense -- in a sense that takes strong hold of the mind. The soul must perceive the infinite richness, fulness and glory of Christ. Else He will be only a root out of dry ground, and you will see in Him no form and comeliness.

### **II. Hence, it is essential that we enquire next -- What are the conditions under which Christ may be thus seen and found?**

- 1. You must thoroughly know yourself and your spiritual wants.

Nobody is much interested in knowing a remedy for a disease which he neither feels nor fears. Suppose some great remedy were proclaimed among us, and we were all fully

assured that it had performed many cures. The testimony seems fair; but, if nobody is suffering from the disease, and if none of the people fear it, there will be very little interest taken in it. Perhaps you could not sell an ounce of it, or get the attention of the people to it for five minutes. There is no sense of want, in relation to that remedy.

So, unless people come to have a deep sense of their own spiritual disease, they will not seek after Christ, and, of course, will not find Him.

But, in order to understand ourselves, we must search ourselves most honestly, and be quite willing to weigh ourselves "in the balances of the sanctuary." If a man will not admit these convictions of personal guilt -- will not let the light of God's word shine in upon his heart, and even shine through his heart, there is no hope for him. Self-blinded to his sin and consequent danger, he must go down to eternal darkness. For God does not deal with us as with stocks, but as with thinking minds. He gives us His law as our rule, and asks us to study it and judge ourselves by its demands. Hence, unless one has made up his mind to know himself, and is willing both to take the trouble and to admit to his heart the whole truth -- there is no hope for him. It is amazing to see how much self-delusion there is, and how much lack of self-scrutiny.

- 2. Another condition of feeling one's need of Christ is that he consider deeply what the Bible teaches respecting himself. It is amazing to see how many read and hear the Bible over and over, and it never gets hold of their attention, and, consequently, they get no just conception of its greatest and most vital truths.

"Why did not you tell me of these things before?" said a young man who had heard the gospel, and who had the finest possible opportunity to know all about it, but who had ruled it out of his mind -- "Why did you not tell me there was such a hell?"

I did tell you; I have often told you and urged it upon your attention.

"No; but you did not get it before my mind."

The reason was, you would not attend to it.

Sometimes one will read a book in time of sermon, as if determined not to hear. Of course, he hears nothing to any purpose. Sometimes, one will sit down to read a chapter in the Bible. A great many precious things are in it, but his eye slips over everything, for his heart is not there. He is not searching for truth and wisdom as worldly men dig for hid treasure. Is it strange that men fail to find the things of the gospel?

- 3. Again, another condition is prayer. There must be earnest, persevering prayer, and the reason why is, that you need God's light and wisdom to instruct you, and He gives only to those who humbly ask. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally; and it shall be given him. A unitarian lady, last winter, who had been strong in her position, finally consented to ask the ladies to pray with her and for her. I said to her -- You have not seen Christ. Ultimately, Christ came; and she exclaimed -- "O what revelations did Christ make of

Himself to my soul!" By asking for prayer in her behalf, she had laid herself open to the truth, and to the Spirit who teaches truth.

- 4. Again, you must forbear to make your own experience a standard in such a sense that you will assume that what you have not known is not worth knowing. Beware of this! If you have not so found Christ that He is more to you than all things else, you ought to understand that you have made very little advance in piety if indeed you have made any at all. If you have not found Him spiritually, and so found Him that your soul is seized and held by Christ, you ought to assume that there is something more yet for you to know.

Take care, also, not to make uninspired men your standard, above the Bible. Don't get anybody's biography and read it as your standard; and especially not, the biography of one who has not known Christ. But read your Bible; and be assured there is no teaching so plain as that. If you will go right to the Bible, and get Christ to teach you, all will be well. Raise the enquiry on every passage. What does this mean? Go upon your knees and ask that divine light may shine upon your soul. I know a young man, who, if he found any difficult passage in reading the Bible, would go at once to no other fountain of wisdom save to Christ Himself. And you need not doubt that Christ will teach you if you really go to Him.

- 5. Moreover, you must beware of prejudice. You may be under the influence of many of which you are not aware. Avoid the posture of committal to any opinions which you have not surely learned from God's word. Let no such committal stand in your way. I know not how many cases I found last winter of those whose minds had been confused with conflicting speculations about Christ. I often said -- You have been discussing these questions here all your life. A little practical experience of Christ as your Savior from sin, would be worth more than all the speculative wisdom you have attained. I became much interested in the case of one young man who had been abroad to complete his education, but who returned with his faith in Christ and Christianity sadly shaken. His Christian friends had been greatly distressed for him. During the winter, a friend of his wrote to him to come to Boston. When he came, this friend of his did not pretend that she could relieve him of his speculative difficulties, but she gave herself to prayer for him, and so did others. When I met him, it was easy to show him that every form of infidelity is self-annihilating. He admitted this, and finally said that the only two consistent schemes were, the common or orthodox one, and nihilism. I said to him -- Can you believe the latter? He answered, Yes. Then you can believe there is neither matter nor mind? Yes. One more question -- What is that which has this belief? What forms this conception? Is this done by a non-entity -- a mere thing? Is your own mind a mere negation?

Then I added -- Young man, I advise you to pray. You are not so great a man as you may suppose. It could not be amiss for you to humble yourself before God, beg His forgiveness, and implore His teaching. He did pray; and his friends also prayed -- till he came into the light of the gospel and found Christ.

### **III. I must now pass to notice, in greater detail, the results of thus finding Christ.**

- 1. The text represents self-renunciation as one of them. He who finds the goodly pearl, sells all

that he has to buy it. When you thus apprehend Christ, you will say as Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It is every way natural that this should be so. It will result in fact. Those who find Christ, will forsake all in the sense of disclaiming all right to hold their property as their own. They abjure all selfish holding of property, and all careful anxiety about any thing of a worldly nature.

- 2. Those who find Christ to be really their Advocate, and know Him to be made of God unto them their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, will find no more need of legal efforts to work out their own salvation. When Christ does all this for the soul, it is enough, and is felt to be. The sinner needs a righteousness; in Christ he finds it. Find in Christ every thing which before he sought in selfish works, what further need has he of self-righteousness? The old robes, or rather rags, may well be laid off and cast away!
- 3. The Bible distinctly teaches that unconverted men do not thoroughly understand the gospel, and never would have devised such a scheme. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2, says, "We speak the wisdom of God -- that (long) hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, (as it is written,) Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," (in the gospel system and to be revealed in gospel times;) -- "But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to him." He does not feel his want of them; hence does not appreciate their value, nor even comprehend their nature. It is doubtful whether Judas ever well understood Christ. He doubtless heard much about Him, and may have had some queries raised in his mind; but, obviously, he did not correctly understand Him.

## REMARKS.

1. The Bible is remarkably a dead letter to every man until the Spirit of God convicts him of sin. Its first power on the heart is only to condemn. The sinner's first experience of the power of the Bible is in its condemning sentence, and in its fearful revealings of his own sin. Conviction fastens on him; his soul, full of want, sallies forth after something better.

Have you ever had this experience -- a deep conviction that you must have something better than your own righteousness? If so, you can appreciate the change that takes place, under this conviction, in the soul's estimate of the value of Christ. If any man can introduce an effectual remedy when a fearful disease is raging in every family, it will be of some use to cry aloud in all the streets -- a remedy, a certain cure! A cure for the cholera -- a cure for the plague! If the cholera were here in its fearful terrors; if, casting your eye from the window at any hour, you could see hearses moving on, slowly and solemnly with their dead; -- in such a state of things, men would gather in troops round the placard, crying out -- Will it bring salvation? Will it stay this fearful plague?

2. So, under conviction of sin, men cry out -- Tell us that again! Even as when the apostles preached with convincing power, men begged of them to tell them more of those glad tidings, on the next Sabbath. Father Oliphant once said -- "I have been reading the Bible now two hours, and have read over yet but two verses." Ah, he had been drinking in their spirit, and partaking of their power! Christ spake to his soul! Said I not unto thee, "If thou canst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?" And

have not some of you lingered long on your knees, while Christ was saying to your inmost heart -- Said I not unto thee, "All things are possible to him that believeth?" The fact is, that when the heart is laid open and prepared to have His glory revealed, a single sentence, a word, has an ocean of meaning. Now, the pearl of great price is found, and verily all else is worthless but Christ. When you speak to them of Christ, they cry -- Tell us that story of the cross again! There is no end to their desire to hear of Christ.

I have had occasion many times to say to my friends -- You can never settle these questions about the person of Christ, by controversy. You must go to Christ for yourselves and say to Him -- Reveal Thyself to me; Thou art divine; let me know it in my own experience. Didst Thou not say -- "When He, the Spirit of truth shall come, He shall guide you into all truth; He shall reprove the world of sin because they believe not on me?" Let that Spirit guide, reprove and sanctify me.

3. Again, it often happens that persons are too self-righteous. You may say to them -- Christ is precious -- the chief among ten thousands; but they don't understand it. Ask them -- Have you ever found Jesus near? They don't know that they have. The truth is, they need to see Him and to get such apprehensions of Him that they cannot but know Him.

4. How few seem to have found Christ and renounced all things for His sake. The Psalmist said -- "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth whom I desire besides Thee;" but, alas, there are not many to sympathize in these utterances of his heart.

Let me say to every unpardoned sinner -- You need to find Christ. You complain of condemnation and bondage. If you can only find that goodly treasure in the field, you will part with all things, as of little worth, that you may gain it.

If ministers do not preach the law, they cannot make men understand the gospel. So long as the spirituality of the law is not understood, people will lose the true idea of Christ.

Sometimes, after the law has deeply convicted men of sin, a single sermon on Christ will bring in hundreds to accept Him as their Savior. But, if men have not this sense of lostness, preaching Christ to them does them no good. You might as well proclaim a remedy for an unknown disease.

Who of you have found Christ? Whoever has will say -- The treasure is far richer than I expected. So it will always be. And with every fresh view of His glories, deeper and deeper will sink your views of self; higher and higher will rise your views of Christ.

If you have not really found Christ, so that you can truly count all things but loss for His name, then you have much more yet to do. You have by no means reached the place yet to rest. O, if theological students were to seek Christ more, and the love of book-learning less, they would surely have far more power. Let them get a rich experience of Christ in the soul, and then they will have one of the first requisites for preaching Christ out of their very souls. It is entirely essential to persuasive eloquence that men should absolutely know that of which they try to persuade others.

On the same principle, every church member needs to have the living gospel in his own heart before

he can hope to commend it with any effect to the hearts of his fellow-men. You must yourself find Christ as the merchant-man found a precious pearl; then you can direct your fellows how to search and where to find.

## **The Self-Righteous Sinner Doomed To Sorrow**

Lecture III  
April 28, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Isa. 50:11: "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

In speaking from this text, I shall enquire,

- I. What is this self-kindled fire -- what are these "sparks ye have kindled"?*
- II. We may next consider the destiny of all these classes.*

### **I. What is this self-kindled fire -- what are these "sparks ye have kindled"?**

The answer must be found in the description which the text itself gives, and in the contrast between this class and that described in the preceding verse. The spirit of this class is one of self-dependence, as opposed to the spirit of depending on God. Here we may well enter into particulars, to illustrate some of the many particular forms it will assume.

- 1. Many assume and take comfort in the assumption that they are in a good state before God. They have done nothing very bad. Setting up a standard of their own by which to judge in the case, they conclude, even on their death-beds, that all is well with them. But these little sparks that cast their glimmer of light over the darkness of the grace, are entirely of their own kindling. They have not carefully compared their own state with the Bible standard of the Christian life. The glimmering light that casts its lurid rays over their death-scene, comes not from the gospel hope, or from divine promise.
- 2. There is another form of self-righteousness. Some will say to you -- "I have endeavored to do right." Do right! What is the law of right-doing? Is there any other save to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind, and your neighbor as yourself? And

does your right-doing come up to the demands of this rule?

- 3. In another form, the sinner says -- "I am doing as well as I can." But are you quite sure of that? Has your own conscience never condemned you? Have you always honored and loved God as your Father -- and have you always treated all your fellow-creatures as His children should be treated? Have you no consciousness of having come greatly short of your real ability in these things?
- 4. Some will say -- "I have at any rate, done a great deal of good. I have been kind to my wife and children, or to my brothers and sisters, and to my neighbors."
- 5. But if you propose to place yourself on the ground of strict law and justice, the one question which the law of God will ask is this -- "Have you continued in all the things written in the law to do them?" Have you kept the whole law and not offended in one point -- ever?

Anything less than this by ever so little will forfeit your title to eternal life on the ground of law.

- 6. Others comfort themselves with good resolutions. With those they get up a fire of their own kindling -- and are fain to think that if they are not as good as they should be, they shall be by and by.
- 7. Many take great credit to themselves for kind feelings and obliging manners. Perhaps by nature they have generous impulses. There are such. Yet they entirely neglect God. They may be very humane. Their bearing towards their fellow-men may not be savage, or oppressive. Therefore they take comfort.

But let such men consider -- the lower animals are more generally kind towards their species than men are towards theirs. Cases are often brought to light in which animals cleave to each other even to death. There is said to be one species of animals so devoted to each other, that if you were to shoot down one of their young, the rest would gather round the dying or the dead, and mourn there, and allow themselves to be shot down till they all lay in death together! Some animals have this feeling; and now shall mankind take great credit for themselves for even far less of it than the lower animals?

- 8. Some men glory in their reformatory principles. Because they are doing so much to improve society and bless mankind, they assume that all must be right between themselves and God. Often such men seem not aware how much they really depend on their own good deeds and righteousness before the Lord.
- 9. Many think themselves as good as professors of religion. Measuring themselves by their neighbors who are in the church, they flatter themselves that they shall be accepted before the great tribunal. It sometimes happens most conveniently for their purpose that there are a few professors whose lives honor ungodliness rather than godliness. Taking advantage of these, they get no small comfort in comparing themselves with ungodly professors of religion.

- 10. Others strike yet a little higher and think themselves as good as the deacons or as some gospel ministers. Thus their dependence is altogether human in its foundation. They warm themselves with sparks of their own kindling.
- 11. Many rely on certain experiences, which perhaps are dreams or visions. Yet they think it concerns them little how they live. They are, it may be, utterly selfish, unwilling to do their part for any public object. Or they are grasping, worldly-minded, hard-fisted, ever loving this present world. Strange, yet true -- such persons will fall back on their own experiences, and find in those, a basis for comforting hopes of heaven! In one instance, a man had written out his experience, so that what he might fail to keep in his memory might be faithfully kept on the written record. In his hours of trial he used to get this and read it over. At last he came to his death-bed. There, feeling the need of his old experience, he sent his little daughter to the drawer to get it; when lo! the mice had found and destroyed it! It was eaten up, and his hope had perished! He had to "Lie down in sorrow!"
- 12. Many prepare for themselves refuges of lies to be used in the same way -- and I may say -- with the same result.
- 13. Some rely for their defence before God, on their unbelief. They do not believe the Bible, and they really make their great sin their special apology and defence before God! They say -- "Lord, we would not believe a word Thou didst say, and therefore we could be under no obligation to obey Thee."
- 14. All those nominally Christian hopes that fail to sanctify the heart, are of this self-righteous -- self-dependent sort. Everything, save the sincere dependence on Christ which makes you like Him in Spirit, falls under this general character, and must end in this fearful doom.

## **II. We may next consider the destiny of all these classes.**

On this fearful subject I surely would not say a word, save that silence would be unfaithfulness to your souls. It is no pleasure to me to disturb your fond hopes, or to trouble you with dreaded fears. But how can I be unfaithful to your souls!

Listen then to God's words of warning. Our text has a word for you! Mark what I say -- all ye who hold on to your delusions -- "This shall ye have at My hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." At whose hand? The hand of Him who speaks in this passage; and He is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. The whole context shows this. He, the Lord of all worlds, cries -- "This shall ye have of My hand." What is this? What will He do? This; "Ye shall lie down in sorrow." When? At the close of life's short day. Then, when the hours of your probation shall be numbered and finished. Then, when your life work shall be over, you shall lie down in sorrow.

- 1. Sorrow naturally bows one down as under a grievous burden. I have known persons so bowed down under sorrow that they could not rise up. O if they could forget; but they cannot; and they must lie down forever under their load of sorrow.
- 2. There is the sorrow of self-reproach; who does not know the keenness of those pangs? I



remember the case of a mother who reproached herself for neglecting two lost children. She was almost deranged. Ah, she never could forgive herself! Whenever you should mention their case, she would look wild and haggard. I could not understand her appearance until she told me the circumstances. O this was an awful case! So you will reproach yourself for neglecting Christ and salvation. With but too much fearful truth, you will say of yourself -- I have been an infinite fool! Alas, "a wounded spirit, who can bear?"

- 3. In your cup there will be the sorrow of unavailing regret. Partial losses may be borne, for while they leave room for hope, human fortitude will rally. But if you have lost all -- if there is nothing left to you -- if your eternity is pure and hopeless ruin, then what can you do? O what a thought is that -- your eternity one mass of unmingled ruin! Nothing can remain to you but everlasting, unavailing regret!
- 4. There will be also the sorrow of a burdened conscience. Each individual sinner will know that he is condemned by God and by every other being in the universe. He cannot but know that every other being must despise him as a guilty, unworthy wretch! Herein is involved the sorrow of being without friends and without sympathy. Your Christian friends -- really the best you ever had -- will have done all they can for you, and then, compelled by your own folly, they left you to your chosen doom. Ah, they can stand by you no longer! Long had they wept in your pathway to hell; but their tears were unavailing! They leave you and you have now no friends in the universe!
- 5. Sympathy often blunts the keen edge of sorrow. The tender relations of the present life seem beautifully arranged to help us bear the bitterness of human sorrow. But there are no such relations there! Each wicked man will have too much of his own to bear to think of you. In all that world of woe, there cannot be one sympathizing look; no, not one sympathizing whisper! In this world, though the mind may sink under the keenest sorrow, and go down, down, under its load of bitterest woe, yet even then, a sympathizing tear will bring relief. But no such relief can visit the home of the finally lost.
- 6. Sorrow is sometimes compared to a consuming fire. The figure is not inappropriate. It has been known to turn the hair all white in a single night. O how does such sorrow drink up the spirit and waste its living energies! But what is this compared with that other sorrow which no man can endure!
- 7. By an effort of will, we can in this world sometimes rule sorrow out of the mind; but vain are all such efforts there. Think of the appalling emphasis with which Christ speaks of the place "where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Or think of the solemnity of His words -- "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" His compassions were so deep that we find His warnings to sinners more emphatic and solemn than those of any inspired prophet or apostle. Not one among them all uttered words so thrilling, so solemn. This is but natural to One whose compassions were so deep and so tender.

## REMARKS.

1. A portion of the sinner's final doom will be the natural outgrowth of his self-deception. When men deceive themselves, they have only themselves to blame. In the very nature of their case therefore, self-reproach must be one of the bitter ingredients in their cup.
2. It is also true (and this is one element of their sorrow,) that God will give expression to His infinite displeasure. He says -- "This shall ye have at My hand." It must be made apparent to the universe that God's hand is in this unutterably awful affliction.
3. It has often been the case here that young people have ruled this subject out of their minds. It hindered their studies. So, assuming that study is worth more than salvation, they have said to Jesus Christ -- "Go Thy way for this time."
4. Some cannot bear to feel sorrow now, and therefore put their sorrows over till they shall come in one eternal flood, that nothing can assuage! They thrust away religious duties now because they dislike them -- as if time could make them more pleasant! Some do not like to have their friends made sad, and therefore they exclude this subject from their attention. How often is this course pursued towards the sick.
5. God's warnings are most emphatic. You see this in our text. It declares most explicitly -- "This shall ye have at My hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." Listen also to those most emphatic and awful words that fell from the lips of our Savior, "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea, And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark 9:42-48.

Is it not amazing that men can have the hardihood to sneer at such language? Who does not know what such figures of speech must mean? Think of going with two hands, two feet -- in your own human body -- "into hell -- into the fire that never shall be quenched!" Think of a soul immortal -- doomed to endless sorrow! If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. Though it be terrible to lose an eye, it is far less terrible than to lose your soul! What emphasis goes with these awful words! How solemnly are they reiterated! With what thunders of power they must have fallen from the lips of the Crucified One!

6. This text and subject should be a warning to the skeptic in his fancied security. Ah, does he think to sneer hell out of existence? Does he vainly dream that his sneers will annihilate that prison-house of woe? Ah! poor, wretched skepticism! How unutterably weak and wicked! Can you warm yourself by such sparks of your own kindling? Thinkest thou to enjoy life where their "worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched?"
7. This subject comes with its warning to the delaying sinner. Now, when pressed to repent, you

comfort yourself with the promise -- I shall not always neglect it. Ah, but you may neglect it too long! Ere you are aware, the line -- the unseen line between God's mercy and His wrath, may be forever passed by.

8. Let Universalists take warning. You have but a miserable refuge. You expect to go to heaven because all the wicked are there. Yes, because all the men of Sodom are there, ascending along with the smoke of their blasted, doomed city, when they were "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire;" -- because they all went up quick to heaven, you expect to go there too! Because all the pirates and murderers of every land and age go there, you expect to get in amongst them! Indeed! But may it not be that your hope, like that of the hypocrite, shall perish when God shall take away the soul?

9. Let spurious converts beware. Those who have long professed piety, but have also long given their hearts to the world, must come within the fearful sweep of the warnings of this text. You are a professor of religion, are you? And yet you live as if this world were your god. How will your hopes abide in the great day that shall search and try men's hopes?

10. Let this warn also, the ambitious, whether students, or ministers, or politicians -- whoever you may be -- take heed lest it come to thee at last, that thou lie down in sorrow!

11. All who live in the experience of Romans 7, whose hearts are in bondage under sin, and not in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free; take warning! What are the sparks with which you compass yourself about? These; that with your conscience, you approve the right, but, with your will, you do the wrong; and can you suppose this will avail you in the great day of the Lord?

12. Ye who depend on the forms of religion without the power of it -- hear what the Savior says in the text: "This shall ye have of Mine hand -- ye shall lie down in sorrow." How do you avoid being aroused and thrown into an agony of anxiety? How is it, ye who are not walking in the Spirit, but in the flesh; you seem to be very much composed. So far from smiting on your breast and crying out -- "Alas, I am undone!" you are finding comfort amid some sparks of your own kindling. What is your comfort? No matter whence it comes if it comes not from Christ. It can be of no value. It is only a flattering unction which you lay to your soul. Wilt thou be warned now? O wilt thou now awake from thy death-sleep, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give thee light?

## **Sufficient Grace**

Lecture IV

May 12, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--2 Cor. 12:9: "And He said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

These are the words of Jesus Christ to Paul. Paul had been favored with many wonderful revelations of heavenly things, and tells us that, lest he should be thereby exalted above measure, there was given him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him. It is useless for us to speculate beyond what is written in respect to this thorn. Suffice it that we know God's design in sending it -- namely, to keep his servant from being exalted unduly, to guard him against self-reliance, and to keep alive in his heart his sense of dependence on God. The thorn being uncomfortable, Paul prays that it may depart from him. Christ had a different plan in mind. He lets it remain, but promises abundant grace to meet the exigency. When Paul comes to understand the plan, he accepts it with joy.

The principle of the divine plan is this: Christ would destroy the spirit of self-dependence -- the great and most besetting temptation of His children. They are continually prone to trust in themselves rather than in Christ. This must be counteracted and cured.

*I. The case of Paul illustrates Christ's manner of dealing with His saints.*

*II. The manner in which we may avail ourselves of this grace of Christ. What are its conditions?*

### **I. The case of Paul illustrates Christ's manner of dealing with His saints.**

He must first give them thorns, and make them feel their weakness and wants; then He shuts them up to rely on Himself alone, leading them to die to all dependence on themselves, and to enter with the fullest committal upon dependence on Christ alone. This is needful to the end that they may avail themselves of His strength and may discard their own.

- 1. "My grace is sufficient for thee," said Christ to Paul; and if we may believe what Paul says of his sinful ways, this must be a very strong case. Paul said he was the chief of sinners. He had been a Pharisee of the strictest sect; in his mad zeal against the friends of Christ, he had persecuted them even unto strange cities; and manifestly, taking into view all the circumstances of the case, he had some reasons for magnifying the grace that could reach such an one as Saul of Tarsus. If Christ could pardon him, it was safe to conclude He could pardon anybody. If grace could humble a soul of self-righteous as his had been, what could it not do? If a man so tempted on every side, once standing high in public favor, but now accounted as "the filth and off-scouring of all things," could yet find grace sufficient to bear all for Christ's sake joyfully, then nobody need doubt the all-sufficiency of this grace.
- 2. Grace, as here used, implies favor in place of frowns; forgiveness where punishment is richly deserved. So much for the past. For the present and the future, it implied the bestowal of all that direction, support, and consolation which is needed. Christ means to assure Paul that His grace

was ample to pardon all the past, and to give strength for every trial and exigency in the present and in the future. This grace is given, not to hamper but to help; adequate to all emergencies; adapted to meet all present circumstance; evermore sufficient for all his need. Jesus would stand by him as One worthy to save. He would provide for all his wants, and in every strait, open a way of escape. Inasmuch as Paul felt painfully his great responsibility in going forth to the battles of the Lord in his ministerial work, Jesus sought to meet precisely this want in the promise -- "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Let the thorn remain," He would say, "let the burden rest on your shoulders, but be assured My grace shall suffice for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. I have laid on you these burdens on purpose that in you I might illustrate the riches of My grace."

- 3. Hence each Christian may apply to himself these precious words -- "My grace is sufficient for thee." Even to Paul, Jesus said -- "My grace is sufficient for thee" to meet all thy responsibilities and discharge all thy duties.
- 4. This is true of all relations of life. Are you parents? Under all your trials and amid all your wants, the grace of Jesus is sufficient for you. Are you magistrates? You may expect the same. In no extremes of trial, need you suppose your case to be so peculiar as to lie outside of the pale of this exceedingly great promise. For Christ's strength, nothing is too hard. In all states of health, the promise holds good. Are you extremely nervous? And while weakened by this infirmity, does there come on you great and apparently crushing responsibilities? You need not pray Christ to deliver you from these circumstances, but only to give you sufficient grace. This is all you need. You may be brought into peculiar relations to the bad temper of others, and these may be really thorns in your flesh; but even so, Christ's grace is sufficient for you, and you have but to ask and receive. These things are to you the thorn in the flesh. If Christ has manifestly brought you into these circumstances and created these conditions of your state, then these are thorns of His sending.

Are you in feeble health? This is your thorn. Are your neighbors, or your wife, or your children, a trial to you? You may go to Jesus for grace. You need not try to tear yourself away from the thorn, or to tear it out of your flesh; the Lord wishes you to come to Him for patience and wisdom to bear and to act the Christian part. You may be sure that if Christ has put you there, He has counted well the cost and knows how much grace you need and whether He shall be able to supply you. He has not placed you there to make these things a snare and a curse to you, but to empty you of self and really to save you with great salvation.

- 5. His grace is sufficient to enable you to maintain the Christian life with honor to the gospel and with peace to yourself. You may rely on this under all circumstances. When you who are students go from this place to your homes, and under all circumstances so peculiar, you fear you shall fall; know ye that this promise is good for all circumstances in which you have a right to be. If you are in yourself unable to stand there, all the better is your case, for then so much the more, will Christ's strength be made perfect in your weakness. You have a right to believe that you shall be all you ought to be in all the circumstances in which Christ may place you. You may expect of Him all He has promised. You may remind Him of this -- that He has called you to trust His grace; that you have no other ground on which to stand; He has shut you up to

the necessity of launching forth upon His faithful word. You may say -- Lord, have I not broken away from all other help and cast my self absolutely upon Thee? Say -- "O Jesus, I expect Thy grace will be sufficient for me; and may I not confide in Thee? I have now before me this present temptation and trial; but, Lord, I expect to live a Christian life, and be a faithful man to Thee -- may I not?" Yes, remember, His grace is all-sufficient, and He cannot withhold it from those who trust Him for it. In all the appropriate circumstances of your life, in all lawful business, you may have grace to help. But if you engage in anything unlawful, you shut yourself off from this promise. In the very act of going into unlawful business or circumstances, you virtually say to your divine Master -- "Of course I must expect to go here alone, for it were simple madness to expect Thy presence with me here." Turning thus from Christ is more than mere unbelief; it is self-sufficiency, and rebellion towards God.

- 6. Most branches of worldly business are essential to our earthly life, and therefore you need not give them up merely because they involve labor and care, for you can perform them in the strength of your Lord. You must not say -- I can not do any worldly business and be a Christian; nor on the other hand should you assume that you can do all sorts of business well by mere grace. You should first enquire if the Lord calls you to that business, for He calls each to the kind to which he is fitted. But mark, let every man have a single eye, and truly aim in all things, to please the Lord. Suppose it to be your duty to preach the gospel, and the Lord lays the conviction of it upon your conscience; yet you say -- "O Lord, let me do something else, anything else, rather than this." Not so, my brother -- you must follow the leading of the Lord and be found in the path of your duty -- else no grace in the universe can be sufficient for you!

## **II. Let us next inquire into the manner in which we may avail ourselves of this grace of Christ. What are its conditions?**

- 1. Paul had the utmost confidence in what Christ said. He constantly expected this promised grace to be at hand and ample. He knew and felt his own entire weakness, but rejoiced rather than mourned, for this. "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "I take pleasure in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in reproaches, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." The promise of Christ entirely relieved all his anxieties.

We are glad that Christ's grace could sustain such a man. He went everywhere declaring the grace of Christ. His own case was a living illustration of this precious truth. I am telling you, he would say, of Jesus Christ. You all see what a temptation I have in my flesh. All this, Jesus helps me to bear by His grace. All the churches knew of his thorn, and saw how he endured and joyfully overcame through all-sufficient grace. They knew how vile a persecutor he had been and how much had been forgiven him. They say also now that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible (in the eyes of the world) and they were glad of this, for now they saw what Christ could do for His children. They saw he did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, as some of the Grecian philosophers claimed to do, but came simply as a saved sinner, full of grace. I remember the case of a poor man who could not pay his rent. While he was sitting in my study, he learned that his landlord threatened to turn him into the street. Now, said he, I shall see the glory of God, for it was always so -- in my emergencies, God comes near.

When I am shut up to God, then He always appears. This simple faith was really edifying to me.

Paul is no longer bowed down in sadness. He knows his responsibilities are great and his burdens heavy; but he also knows who has said -- "My grace is sufficient for thee." Oh indeed, he knows Jesus Christ! He has seen Him and heard His voice. Now you may see Paul go on calmly and joyfully, taking pleasure in infirmities, and full of triumphant faith. "Ah," he says, "the power of Christ will rest on me, and I may therefore glory in all these things before all the churches and all the world." Now therefore, wherever he goes, Christ shows in him the fulness of the gospel he preaches. Christ in him preached it; Christ in him lived it; and thus, in the mouth of these two witness, every word is established.

- 2. Again: we must be satisfied with grace for the day. We must have faith to live by the day and by the hour. Suppose these young men, fitting for the ministry, should insist that before they go out to their work, they must have an ocean of grace, so as to need no more little daily rills -- just as if they could not trust Jesus beyond this day, or were going where there is no Jesus. This is wrong.

This grace is like the ancient manna, falling and to be gathered each day for each day's wants. If you gather more, because you are afraid God will not send tomorrow, it rots in your vessel. So of this grace, you need it fresh each day -- grace to preach at the hour; grace to rest and sleep in its time. Sometimes God calls for no labor -- for nothing but peaceful rest. As the mother said to her sick child -- you are too weak to pray loud; but not too weak to trust. So of the wearied body; it is fit only to hang on the Lord and trust. This does not require much strength.

- 3. Another condition is to commit yourself fully to His faithfulness. Without this, all else avails nothing. As singers who strike their notes timidly, hanging back and letting down, murder all harmony in music; or as those who lead in public prayer can do nothing unless they commit themselves to prayer and lead off trusting in God; or as in preaching, men can do nothing save as they commit themselves to God and to their work, and lead off in humble faith; so must every Christian in all his Christian life. Paul said in his heart -- I know that this promised grace is sufficient for me; then, so trusting, he led off and labored with unfaltering step. Only so, could that grace have availed for all his wants.

When you have committed yourself thus to Christ, this fact becomes a valid argument under all circumstances for you to plead before the Lord.

"Lord, Thou hast given me Thy faithful word and I have believed it. Thou hast led me to believe; Thou hast called me where I am; now, Lord, I have no recourse left but to trust in Thee. I have committed myself to a Christian profession before the world; now, Lord, I must insist on the grace Thou hast promised, so that I may not dishonor Thee. I have left all to follow Thee -- have turned away from my home, from lucrative business, from prospects of fame -- every thing for Thy sake, and now I have no dependence save in Thee; let me now be made strong in Thee."

- 4. Never shrink from responsibility through unbelief. Never say -- I can't. God's children should at least learn what we try to teach our children. When they say -- I cannot ; we answer -- Don't say that, but say, I'll try. Parents may be unreasonable and ask too much of their children; but God never asks too much. The very requisition is evidence that all is right.

## REMARKS.

1. In the connection of our text, we have a case in which prayer is answered to the spirit and not to the letter. Paul prayed God to take away the thorn. This was the letter. The ultimate thing he sought as a Christian was, that it might not impair his usefulness, but might glorify God. This he cared for most of all; and to this, Christ answered -- I will take care of that; it shall greatly glorify God and promote your usefulness.

2. When God answers our prayers in this way, we are in danger of overlooking the fact of an answer. We pray for the ultimate end of the glory of God. This God sees, and to this He answers. In Paul's case, if God had removed the thorn, his evidence that God heard his prayer could not have been so vivid as it was without the removal and with the sufficient grace. But sometimes men are too blind to see such answers. This is often a stumbling-block. You wonder why God does not answer your prayer. He does answer it, better than you had thought.. You may not see it as Paul saw, that God has high and useful ends to answer in giving you the thorn in your flesh. He means to illustrate the power of His grace. Often have I seen persons in sore trials. God had led them into wonderfully trying circumstances; and after they have wondered and questioned long, and have finally turned their hearts to prayer, then they see, and they cry out -- There, there, now all is plain to me. I said with Jacob -- "All these things are against me. Joseph is not, Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin too;" and what shall I do for my children! Ah, good Jacob, you are for once mistaken! All these things are for you, not against you; your eyes shall yet behold your Joseph, and your Simeon and your Benjamin also; and through all coming ages, men shall study these things and glorify God for them.

So some of you may be saying -- All these things are against me; all this bad health -- this great trial -- all is against me. No, no; not one of them! You say -- When shall these things end? God will take care of that. Ah, but say you, I am going down among the breakers. I have lost my faith! Indeed; but you must not lose your faith!

3. When we have thoroughly renounced our self-dependence and are emptied of pride, it is impossible that we should not accept Christ and sympathize with His promise of help, saying -- "Most gladly will I rather glory in my weakness that the power of Christ may rest on me." When one is really crucified to self, it is easy to commit all to Christ and become lost in Him. Then you will rejoice in His promise and rest in His strength. No longer chafed with restless fears, you sit calmly trustful in His power to save. If the winds blow, let out more cable. So the mariners do. They know when the wind is high, it raises the vessel, and she lifts her anchor and loosens its hold. Then they let on more cable and let the anchor sink down deeper among the rocks, and give the ship no chance to lift it from its hold. So let your faith go down deeper and grasp the rock of the promises more firmly. But do you cry out -- The shore is near! -- I am afraid! No, no; never fear. Let out your cable! Give Providence a chance. Let the Lord have room to come in His glory for your relief.

4. In promoting revivals of religion, do not fret yourself. Give the Lord a chance to work. See to it that



you are doing what He can bless. Don't shut Him up to the present moment, but pray and hold on! Trust Him and wait till He shall come in His power. Wait, I say, but not in the way of doing nothing. Do all that His providence and Spirit may seem to indicate. So doing, you may trust Him to come in His glorious power in the best possible time.

You cannot possibly be too confident that His grace is sufficient for all your need. You need not fear any where, if you do your part well, that Christ will not do His part equally well. He will give you success and help you to honor His name. O young man, are you afraid to commit yourself to the work of the ministry lest your strength fail you? Remember Him who has said -- "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

O sinner, His grace is sufficient also for you. Are you ready to commit yourself to His care? Oh, but you say -- I am not a Christian; what right have I to believe that His grace will avail for me? Come and believe; come now, forsaking the ways of sin; so shall you find His promise is to you in all its perfect fulness. Have you a want? Come with your heart all empty; come, bring empty vessels not a few; His grace shall richly fill them all. Don't say -- my circumstances are so peculiar; -- no matter if they are; no matter if such case never was before; will it therefore lie beyond His power to meet it? Nay, verily, not while His name is Jesus; not while He proclaims of Himself -- "I, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

## **On Following Christ**

Lecture V

June 9, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--John 21:22: "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

These words Christ spake to Peter. He had previously given Peter to understand that in his advanced life his liberty would be restrained, and that he would have the honor of glorifying God by a martyr's death. A question arose in Peter's mind -- more curious than wise -- how it would fare with his fellow disciple, John. So he enquires -- "Lord, what shall this man do?" Gently rebuking this idle inquisitiveness, Jesus replied -- "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

1. This reply involves a principle, and hence it has a wide practical application. It is really addressed to us.

2. Assuming it to be thus addressed to all at the present day, what does it teach? What does Jesus say to us?

Suppose He stood where I do this moment and you knew it to be Jesus Himself, and saw that He was preparing to speak. You see the halo of glory around His head; you note the blending of meekness and majesty that identifies Him most fully as one like unto the Son of God, and your whole soul is moved within you to catch every word He may utter. Oh what an earnest expectation! If He were to speak in this house, you would hear the ticking of that clock more plainly than you now do. If you chanced not to catch every word distinctly, you would ask one and another -- What did He say! What was that!

*I. What is this command?*

*II. What now should be the attitude of our minds?*

*III. What is this thing which He requires?*

*IV. What is implied in obeying this command?*

*V. Why shall we follow Him?*

*VI. Will you set yourself to find some excuse? What are your excuses?*

### **I. He speaks, you observe, in the form of a positive command; what is this command?**

Remember, if it be the Lord Jesus Christ, He has the right to command. Who else in earth or heaven has this right more absolutely than He? It must be of the utmost consequence to us to know what He does command us. Whatever it be, it must vitally affect our well-being both to know and to do it. Words from one so benevolent must be for our good. Certainly, He never did speak, but He said things for the good of those to whom He spake.

- 1. It must also be for the general good; for the Great King and Lord of all never overlooks what pertains to the general good.
- 2. Moreover, it must be safe to obey. Certainly; how can it be otherwise? Did it ever happen that any man obeyed Him and found it unsafe?
- 3. Of course it must be our DUTY to obey. How can it be that Christ shall ever command us, and we be not bound solemnly to obey Him?
- 4. Also it must be possible for us to obey. Did Christ ever enjoin impracticable things? Could He possibly do a thing so unreasonable?

All these points must be assumed and admitted. How can we ever doubt a moment on any one of them? This then is the state of the case.

## **II. What now should be the attitude of our minds?**

- 1. Manifestly this -- Let Him speak; we will surely listen and obey. What does He say? Every word He says, I know, will be infinitely good. Let me catch every intimation of His will. "His words shall be sweeter to my taste than honey or the honey comb."
- 2. But will any of you turn away saying -- "I don't care what He says?" Will you not rather feel this -- "Let Him say what He will, it is all good and I will surely hear and obey it."
- 3. If such be your attitude towards Him, then we are ready to examine what He says. Observe, He gives us something to be done, and moreover, something to be done by yourself. No matter just now to you what others may do, or what God's providence may allot to them. "What is that to thee?" It has always been the temptation of the human heart to look at the duties of others rather than one's own. You must resist and put down this temptation. Christ has work for you to do, and it becomes you to address yourself earnestly to do it. Observe also, that it is to be done now. He gives you no furlough, not even to go home and bid farewell to those of your house. He can take no excuse for delay.

## **III. Now let us ask -- What is this thing which He requires?**

He says -- "Follow thou Me." What does this mean? Must I leave my home? Must I abandon my business? Am I to change my residence? Am I to follow Him all over the land?

- 1. The latter meaning was plainly the true one when Jesus dwelt among men in human flesh. He then called certain men to follow Him as His servants and disciples, and they were to attend Him in all His journeyings -- to go where He went and to stop where He stopped. They were to aid Him in His missionary work.
- 2. Now, Christ is no longer here in human flesh; and therefore following Him cannot have precisely that physical sense. Yet now, no less than then, it implies that you obey His revealed will, and do the things that please Him. Now, you are to imitate His example and follow His instructions. By various methods, He still makes known His will, and you are to follow whithersoever He leads. You must accept Him as the Captain of your salvation, and let His laws control all your life. He comes to save His people from their sins and from the ruin that sin, unforgiven, must bring down; and you must accept Him as such a Savior. This is involved in following Him.

## **IV. But here let us enquire somewhat more fully, What is implied in obeying this command?**

- 1. Of course it implies confidence in Him who commands, a confidence in the exercise of which you commit yourself fully to obey Him and trust all consequences to His disposal. There can be no hearty, cheerful obedience without this implicit confidence.
- 2. It implies also a willingness to be saved by Him -- that is, saved from sin. You make no reservation of favorite indulgences; you go against all sin and set yourself earnestly to withstand every sort of temptation.

- 3. It involves also a present decision to follow Him through evil or good report -- whatever the effect may be on your reputation. You are ready to make sacrifices for Christ, rejoicing to be counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.
- 4. It is a very common fault to admit what Christ requires, yet to fail very much in doing it. This is saying, I go, sir -- but going not. Such a man does not follow Christ.
- 5. He requires immediate action. He has work for you to do today, and He demands of you that you commit yourself to full obedience.

#### **V. Let us next enquire -- WHY shall we follow Him?**

Suppose Christ were here personally and from this desk announced this command -- Follow thou Me. Would you ask to know why? You could very soon assign some weighty reasons. Your own mind would suggest them. And do you know any reasons why you should not follow Him? I presume it is settled in every mind why you should obey this command now and here, without one moment's delay. Is there any of you that can assign any reason why you should not obey this command? Does any of you doubt at all whether this be your duty? Can you think of any reason why it is not?

- 1. Then it must be your duty, and you ought to do it. The matter should lie in your mind thus -- If this is my duty, of course I must do it at once. Doing duty is the business of my life.
- 2. You owe it to Jesus Christ to follow Him. If you are a student, none the less should you follow Jesus everywhere. See that young man. You ask him why he goes to college; what does he say? Does he say -- Because I would be better prepared to teach men about Jesus Christ? Coming to his teachers, does he say -- Give me an education; give me all the discipline of mind and heart you can, that I may be the better able to teach and preach Jesus Christ? Tell me all you know of Christ; pray for me that God may teach my heart the whole gospel? Is this what he says? In this sort of way should a Christian student follow Christ.

Do you not owe this to Him? Can any one of you deny this? Have you any right to live to yourselves? If you could gain some good for the moment, could you think it right to have your own way, and disown Christ? What if you were to gain the whole world and lose your own soul?

- 3. You owe it to yourself to take care of your own soul. God lays on you the responsibility of saving your own soul, and you must bear it. No man can bear that responsibility for you. You must bear it for yourself alone.
- 4. You owe it to your friends to follow Christ. You have friends over whom you may exert a precious influence. For their sakes you ought to know Christ, that you may lead them also to follow Him. You have friends also who have done much for you and have loved you much. It is due from you to them that you should follow Christ. You owe it to your father and mother. Are they praying souls? It is due to the sympathy they feel for you and to the strong desire they have for your salvation. If they have never prayed, it is time they did, and time that you should lead

them to Christ.

- 5. You owe it to the whole world. There are millions who know not Jesus, some of whom you might teach so that they shall not die and never have known Him.
- 6. One more thought as to yourself. Such as you make yourself by obeying or not obeying this precept, you will be to all eternity. What you do in this matter will have its fruits on your destiny long after the sun and stars shall have faded away. You have no right to live so that when you die, men shall say -- There goes from earth one nuisance, and hell has more sin in it now than it ever had before.
- 7. Again; this is the only path of peace. If you would have peace, you must seek and find it here. Here thousands have found it; but none ever found it any where else.

**VI. Jesus Christ says to you -- "Follow thou Me." Will you set yourself to find some excuse? What are your excuses?**

- 1. Do you say -- "There are so many opinions among men. I don't know what to do."

Ah but you do know. It is only a pitiful pretense when you say you don't know your duty. Who of you does not know enough to be simple-hearted and to go on in duty and please God? No opinions of men need stumble you if you simply follow Christ. You talk about the various opinions among Christian sects; but differ much as they may in lesser matters, on the great things of salvation, they are all agreed. They all agree essentially, that to follow Christ in confidence and simple love is the whole of duty and will ensure His approbation. Follow this simple direction, and all will be well with you.

- 2. But some will say -- "I believe all will be saved."

You do, indeed! Will they all become like Christ before they die? Do they all in fact become holy in this world? Christ is in heaven. Can you go there unless you become first like Him in heart and in life?

What is such a belief good for? Often has this question been forced on my mind in Boston -- what is this belief that all men will be saved, good for? People plead this belief as their excuse for not following Christ, "since we shall all come right at last any how." Can this belief make men holy and happy? Some of you will answer -- "It makes me happy for the present, and that is the most I care for." But does it make you holy? Does it beget true Christian self-denial and real benevolence? A faith and a practice which make you happy without being holy are but a poor thing. Indeed, it cannot fail of being utterly mischievous, because it lures and pleases without the least advance towards saving your soul. It only leaves you the more a slave of sin and Satan.

- 3. But you say -- "It makes me so miserable to believe that any will be forever lost!"

What then? What if it does make you feel unhappy? It may make you unhappy to see your guilty friend sent to the penitentiary or the gallows now; but such a doom may be

none the less deserved -- none the less certain, because it hurts your feelings.

How can there be any other way of final happiness save through real holiness? The fountain of all happiness must lie in your own soul. If that is renewed to holiness and made unselfish, loving, forgiving, humble -- then you will be happy of course, but you cannot be happy without such a character.

- 4. Some of you may say -- "I don't believe in the necessity of a change of heart."

Yes you do; you are altogether mistaken in regard to the matter if you suppose you don't believe in the necessity of a change of heart. There cannot be such a man in all Christendom -- a man who does not know that by nature his heart is not right with God; yet that it must become right with God before he can enjoy God's presence in heaven. Is there one whose conscience does not testify that, before conversion, his heart is alienated from God? Do you not know that you are unlike God in spirit and that you must be changed so as to become like God before you can enjoy Him? What! a sinner, knowing himself to be a sinner, believe he can be happy in God's presence without a radical moral change! Impossible! Every man knows that the sinner, out of sympathy with God, must be changed before he can enjoy God's presence and love. Every man, unchanged by God's grace, knows himself to be a sinner and not holy by nature.

A case in point to show the force of truth on even hardened hearts, came lately to my knowledge. A Christian lady being on a visit to one of the towns in Canada, was called on by a gentleman of high standing in society, but who had always lived a prayerless, ungodly life. A man of strong will and nerves, professedly a skeptic, he yet took the ground before this Christian lady that he was ready, as a means of becoming a Christian, to do any thing that she should say. Well, then, said she, kneel down here and cry out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." "What!" replied he, "do this when I don't believe myself a sinner?" You need not excuse yourself on that ground, said she, for you know you are a sinner. Having passed his word of honor to a lady, he could not draw back, and therefore kneeled and repeated the proposed words. Arising, he asked, what next? Do so again; and say the same words. He raised the old objection -- I don't believe myself a sinner. She made the same answer as before, and a second time he repeated the words of that prayer. The same things were said -- the same thing done, the third time, and then, hardened as he was, his heart felt the force of those words, and he began to cry in earnest -- "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" His heart broke, and he prayed till mercy came!

So often, when men say they don't believe this and that, they do believe it so far as conviction is concerned. They know the truth respecting their own guilt.

- 5. But you plead, perhaps, this: I must attend to other duties first; my studies, or my business.

No, my friend; no other duties can come before this. This is the greatest duty and ought to be the first. Hear what the Savior said on this very point. He said to one man -- "Follow Me;" and he answered -- "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." This is a strong case, and is placed on record for our instruction because it is strong. It may seem to you

very unnatural that Jesus would call any man away from a duty so obvious and so inborn in every human heart; yet what did He say? He gave no heed to this plea, but answered -- "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Not even the last rites of burial to the dead, must be allowed to stand before obedience to Christ's call. No doubt Christ saw a disposition in this man to plead off, and therefore, He saw the necessity of meeting it promptly. Suppose the man had said at first, "Yes, Lord, I am ready; my father lies unburied; but I am ready if Thou callest me, to follow Thee even now;" it is at least supposable if not probable, that Jesus would have answered -- Yes; I will go with thee to that funeral. Let us lay the dead solemnly in their last bed, and then go to our preaching.

Another man replied to his call, saying, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home in my house." To him, Jesus replied, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Thus Christ teaches that no duty can possibly come before this of giving up your heart to follow Him. You must make up your mind fully to this life-business, and really enter upon it -- else all things else are only an offence to God.

Do you say, I must study? You must first make up your mind to do all for Christ, else study can be no acceptable duty. When Jesus says to you -- "My son, give Me thy heart," He wants nothing else instead of your heart. He does not wish to be put off with some other duty, than the very one He calls for. When He says -- "Follow Me;" He demands an explicit answer, whether you will or not, and He cannot accept anything evasive.

## REMARKS.

1. You are now, each one of you, called to follow Christ, with the implied pledge on His part, that if you give yourself to Him, He will give Himself to you. Think of that. Would it not be a blessed thing to have Christ give Himself to you, to be your eternal Friend -- your Portion and Joy forever?

Suppose Jesus were passing along here, and were calling one and another by name to follow Him. When He came near you, would you not be saying in your heart -- "I hope He will certainly call me"? Or can it be you would say -- "I hope He will not call me!" Can it be you could say that? Would you not rather say -- Oh is it possible He will pass me by; how awful! Can it be? And if so, shall I never see Him passing by so near again?

O sinner, Jesus is now passing by you, so near; arise and speak to Him for He does call you; and you must decide now whether you will follow Him or not -- and decide for eternity!

2. Don't think about others. Say not as Peter said -- "Lord, what shall this man do?" This is an old and artful device of your adversary -- this turning your mind to think about others. If you are wise, you will think about yourself only.

3. It is a great comfort to reach the point where you say -- I will follow Him any how, let others do as they please. I will go after Christ. This is just what you should say; and when you come to this point with a full heart, you will find it is a most precious decision.

4. You are now called to decide your own future destiny. Some decision upon it you will certainly make. You take a step here today which may decide all your future being. Is it not well that you take this step right?

(1.) Suppose I should now say -- Come, separate yourselves according to the decision you make. All ye who will follow Christ, come into this aisle; what will you do?

(2.) Will you refuse and say -- I will not follow Christ yet; I have ends of my own to accomplish first; I will not be His servant now? Is this your decision? Shall we ask to have it put on record? It will go on record any how, whether you ask it or not.

(3.) Some of you will perhaps say -- I will not decide just now. I did not come here today expecting to decide so great a question at this time.

What, indeed! Did not you expect to hear a gospel sermon today? And did you not know that in every gospel sermon there is in fact a gospel call on you to repent and follow Jesus?

(4.) But will you now turn again and say -- "Lord, I can't understand, I cannot realize why I should follow Thee." Don't say that; for you can understand it. And you can decide this question today.

But says some young man -- If I should go after Him, I am afraid I should have to forego some of my favorite plans for life. I might have to give up my intended profession. Another might be debarred from some lucrative business that pays better than following Christ.

Then you can go and tell your Savior so. Tell Him how the case lies. Tell Him you cannot trust Him to provide for your worldly interests. You are afraid He would send you also to preach the kingdom of God, and might pay you but poorly for your services. Perhaps He will excuse you from His service here and from entering into the joy of your Lord hereafter besides!

(5.) There is a young man who says -- I can't follow Christ now, because I cannot leave my dear Christian mother. Then go upon your knees and spread out your excuse before the Lord. Say to Him -- My good mother gave me the best Christian instruction and her constant prayers; she did every thing to make me Thy servant; but now since Thou art calling me to follow Thee, I find I cannot go and preach Thy love to a dying world. She cannot spare me and I cannot leave her.

Indeed, you cannot afford to. And your pious mother thinks her claim is above that of the Savior! Well, you must both make your choice.



## **Christian Consciousness, a Witness For God**

Lecture VI  
June 23, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Isa. 43:10: "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord."

When I first became religious, it seemed to me very wonderful that in all the preaching I had heard, there had been so little said of the testimony of personal experience. I had often heard appeals to the external evidences of revelation, such as make the reception of the testimony a mere matter of opinion; but I had rarely heard any allusion to the testimony of Christian Consciousness. This seemed to me a great omission.

I propose now to call your attention to the following points,

*I. The religion of the Bible is a matter of consciousness.*

*II. Religious consciousness -- the consciousness of religious truth -- is the highest possible proof of the reality of religion.*

*III. Witnesses, who testify from consciousness, supposing them to be credible, are the best possible, and such testimony is the best possible.*

*IV. All counter testimony is merely negative and amounts to nothing.*

### **I. True religion is a matter of consciousness.**

- 1. It is a state of mind, and especially a voluntary state. Essentially, it is a state of voluntary committal to God, in which the mind, deliberately and of its own choice, determines to obey and please God. This action of the will controls the outward life by a law of necessity. Hence as the will is, so must the outward life be. But all acts of will are matters of consciousness, and therefore all true religion must be a thing of consciousness.
- 2. According to the Bible, every Christian is a new creature -- passed into a new state of life and of moral action. Of this great change he must be conscious. Before it, he lived for self and sin, this was a fact of consciousness; after it, he lives for God; of this he is conscious. Before it he pleased himself; after it he pleases God. Of all this he must be conscious.

Again, he is conscious of possessing various knowledge which he had not before. He knows God. Before conversion, he had the conviction that there is a God, but this alone is no proper knowledge of God. After conversion, he truly knows God. So the Bible teaches. It invites men to acquaint themselves with God, and assumes that when converted they do in fact come to know God in a far higher sense than ever before.

- 3. So of Christ. Those who do not receive Him as their Savior cannot know Him truly. They must be void of that experience of His power to save, which they might have. The Bible always assumes this.
- 4. Yet further, real Christians know that God is love. They may have had some idea or notion of this before, but they did not know it. Now they do. Their own experience is a witness to their souls. It has become to them a matter of consciousness.
- 5. Moreover, they know that Jesus is a Savior from sin. They have tried and proved this precious truth. Whereas He said -- "My grace is sufficient for thee;" they believed and therefore have had the promise verified to themselves.
- 6. They also know that the Bible is true. They know it is from God, for they have felt its power -- a power it could never have if it were a fiction and the belief in it a mere delusion. No one can become a Christian without seeing more of God and knowing more of His power and love than any unconverted men can see and know.
- 7. Christians know that the Bible gives the true account of man's natural state. Their own experience confirms this. So also does their experience show that the Bible gives the true account of the Christian state. This is a matter of everyday testimony. I could refer you to numerous cases in which, under the teaching of their own experience, men have passed at once from a state of doubt as to the Bible to a state of assured faith. Nothing is more common than for men who have been stubbornly skeptical as to the Bible, to see their skepticism instantly depart as soon as they came to feel a just sense of their own sin. The same conviction which flashed on their minds a sense of sin, revealed also the truthfulness of the Bible. They saw at once that their grounds for rejecting it were fallacious -- that its truths correspond so perfectly with their own personal convictions that it must all be true. Such testimony, I say, is exceedingly abundant.

## **II. Consciousness of religious truth is the highest proof possible of the reality of religion.**

On all subjects in which consciousness is legitimate proof, it is the highest proof possible. We cannot doubt that of which we are conscious. We know it to be true. No other testimony carries to our minds such conviction. If therefore we confine ourselves strictly to what we know in consciousness, we cannot be mistaken.

## **III. Witnesses who testify from consciousness, supposing them to be credible, are the best witnesses possible, and their testimony the best possible.**

- 1. Let it be supposed that their statements are credible; then, if they can testify from their own

consciousness, there can be no ground for doubting their testimony. No testimony can be better than theirs.

- 2. Now if it be true that religion is a matter of consciousness, it follows that the testimony of Christians is positive, and is the best that can be had.

#### **IV. All counter testimony is merely negative and amounts to nothing.**

To illustrate this let us make a supposition. Though very strong, it will not be so strong as the case of Christian testimony which I adduce it to illustrate.

- 1. Let it be supposed that one hundred thousand persons have had a certain disease, have taken one particular medicine, and have all been cured. The point in this case is the strength of the testimony, furnished by their experience. I maintain that, though very strong, it is not so strong as the testimony from Christian experience to the truth of divine revelations. For, in the case of the disease, it is barely possible that nature alone, without the medicine, may have cured every one of them. Yet no reasonable man would doubt such testimony. You would think it ridiculous to call it in question.
- 2. Suppose further, that the only counter testimony is simply negative. Some men come forward and testify -- "We had the same disease; we did not take the medicine and we were not cured." This amounts to nothing. It is a well known principle in law that such testimony goes for just nothing.
- 3. But the testimony of Christians is even stronger than the positive testimony of the men cured of disease, for they are not only conscious of being cured of the plague of sin, but they know in their consciousness to what they must ascribe this change. They know what sin is and how it lived and reigned before. They know it never did and never would cure itself. It is a matter of certain knowledge by what means the power of sin in their hearts is broken. They know God as the power that saves. They know the melting, subduing influence of His love. They have felt the transforming power of His truth. One hundred thousand persons who have lived in sin now come forward and testify that, under the gospel, they came into a new life, and became subjects of a new and most blessed influence. Now then, you may look at this new life. You may see them going forward in this new life till they die and lying down at last in death, under its unabated influence. Are not such men the most credible of all witnesses? Is not theirs the most absolute and conclusive testimony? Surely this is perfectly conclusive. To deny it is far more absurd than to deny the existence of such a city as London. You say you don't believe there is such a city as London. You don't! Well, that is not so absurd as to deny the reality of religion and the truth of revelation. What is this testimony? Is it like the testimony of spiritualists, founded on raps and table-tippings? Nothing like it. The senses may be imposed upon. Modern spiritualism has many an open door for deception or mistake. But this experience of Christians is intensely strong and rich, broad and deep, it pervades the whole mind and character, and leaves no door open for deception or mistake. He who never had it may err by supposing he has had it; but he who actually has it knows that there is divine power in it. He knows that he has God's presence and smiles. Thousands of times, it may be, he has had this experience. He knows that he communes with God. It is not possible that he should know any fact with more

certainty than he knows this. To reject such testimony as this is therefore vastly more ridiculous than to call in question the existence of a London.

- 4. Consequently, the position of infidels is simply ridiculous. What are they doing? They are treating religion as a mere matter of opinion, ignoring all the testimony of consciousness. Shall we give them the credit of being reasonable men? No. I would sooner sit down to prove to a skeptic the existence of London, than admit the attitude of skeptics as to revelation to be reasonable.
- 5. In this matter, deceived professors have properly no testimony to give. They can only say, they took a quack medicine, and it did not cure them. An ocean of such testimony would be good for nothing. No amount of it can begin to disprove the testimony of those who say they took the true medicine and it actually cured them.

### REMARKS.

1. The objection that religious faith is a prejudice of education and nothing better, is altogether groundless, Some young men say -- I have not examined this subject myself. I have been told so and so; -- nothing more. Hence I can easily throw off opinions that have no other and better foundations.

My dear friend, don't you believe your father and your mother? Can you doubt that they love you and mean to tell you the truth? No matter if they have not so much science or so much education in general as many others. This thing is one of experience and not of science; and don't you see that they must know enough to make their experience the best possible testimony?

The fact is, that the testimony on which they rely is the very best that can be. They say what they know, and teach you what they have felt. These are matters of consciousness to them. Furthermore, you know they love you, and cannot wish to deceive you. Why not then accept their testimony?

2. It is objected, very foolishly, that people are influenced to believe the Bible, by what men say to them. True enough they are, and truly they ought to be. They ought to be influenced by good testimony; why not? God made us to believe in good testimony, and society could not exist otherwise.

3. The great mass of men who admit the truth of revelation and of revealed religion, do it on proper grounds. They do not hold this belief on the ground of an original examination of all the external evidences, but on the evidence of consciousness, either their own, or that of others. This is perfectly substantial and indubitable evidence.

4. It is indeed true that when the doctrines of the Bible are brought clearly before unconverted men, they usually ensure a conviction of their truth. They appear so reasonable that few men are unreasonable enough to deny their truth. But in nine cases out of ten in which men are converted to God, they believed the Bible on its internal evidence, as revealed in Christian consciousness and brought to them by God's witnesses. They have never seen miracles wrought, but they have seen men turned from sin to God and made new creatures in Christ. And they have had the good sense to infer that such great changes must indicate a power more than human. I said they had not seen miracles. In the first ages of Christianity, God deemed it wise to sanction by miracles the men who were to teach

and write His word by authority. We have no evidence that miracles are wrought now.

5. It is a great error that so little stress is laid on the testimony of consciousness. Theodore Parker stands up in Boston declaring, that Jesus is only a man and not to be relied on to teach an infallible system of truth. Openly does he reject all proof from consciousness. He thinks the question of revelation is simply and wholly historic. Yet if he would, he might see that there are thousands who can testify that they know God, and that they know Jesus Christ. They can confirm the great doctrines of revelation most triumphantly by their own experience.

It is a great error when Christians allow themselves to be driven by infidels from the testimony of experience to the evidence of the historic argument. They should not allow their enemies to choose the strong-hold in which Christians shall entrench themselves, nor the weapons they shall use in their warfare for truth. Let Christians see that they know their own strength and then use it.

Suppose one should try to prove to me that I do not know God, nor the power of His truth. Shall I try to prove the Bible to be from God by any foreign historic testimony? No; I come at once to my consciousness. Does he reject this? He has no right to reject it. I know what the sinning state is and what the Christian state is also. My experience perhaps takes a broader range than his.

Suppose he denies the real divinity of Christ, and affirms that He is only a man. We meet him with the testimony of Christian consciousness. For almost two thousand years, Christians have been enjoying communion with Christ -- thousands at the same moment in every part of the world. They know this to be the case. They are perfectly conscious of this communion. How will the Unitarian, or rather the humanitarian, explain this? Is Jesus an omnipresent man? Is He so near omniscient too that He can hold communion of mind and heart with thousands of His people at the same instant, "always even to the end of the world?"

It is a great error that Christians should withhold this testimony of experience. Sometimes they are too modest, and seem to think it will be obtrusive. But this is a false modesty. It inflicts a great wrong on the cause of truth. It is a wrong to God. They ought to become His witnesses. It should be remembered that these great gospel truths are not only in the Bible, but they are in us -- in our hearts. Therefore we ought to get over this false modesty which is dumb as to the testimony of consciousness, and not allow the defenders of inspiration to be driven back on to the ground of the historic evidences only.

This testimony settles all the great questions of theology; the divinity and work of Christ; the depravity of man; the work of the Spirit; and the fact of repentance. All these great truths find ample attestation in Christian experience.

Bearing upon the truth of the Christian religion, a very pertinent case is related, on this wise: -- a lawyer attended a public religious conference; took his seat and began to make notes of things said. After the meeting had progressed considerably he arose and said -- I came into this meeting to take testimony. I was anxious to know whether there actually is any sufficient evidence for the Christian faith. I have taken down the names of sixty witnesses. They all speak of what they do know and testify what they have felt. I am constrained to admit that no men could possibly be better certified of

the facts than they. Besides, I know these men and I must admit their honesty. I should believe them on any other subject which they understood. I am compelled to believe them now. As I have been taught and trained to receive testimony, I cannot reject this. No testimony was ever stronger. So he said.

Is not this altogether reasonable? Yes, here was testimony enough. A tenth part of which would convict any man of murder.

This point of our argument is specially forcible now. What clouds of fresh witnesses are rising up in all the land! Indeed God has never since the Christian era suffered His truth to lack this sort of testimony; yet it comes in special copiousness in our own day. Will you not believe it?

6. How awful it must be to bear a false testimony as to God! Professed Christians do this when they forsake Him, and dishonor His truth.

How guilty also it must be to withhold evidence and fail to testify when God calls you to bear witness for Him! It must be awful to bear contradictory testimony, now this and now that. Better it were none at all!! Nothing so shakes the confidence of intelligent men of the world.

Again, it is fearful for the minister to preach the gospel and his church to unpreach it; for him to show what Christian experience is, and his church to gainsay every word of it by their ungodly lives. We should remember that worldly men are always by, taking notes. They are sure to take down our testimony. We ought to see to it that they have no excuse for getting it wrong, and also that they have no false testimony to get. The lawyer did so till he had the testimony of sixty witnesses. Think of that! So it is always. Somebody is noting down our daily testimony. All men are bound to take this testimony. One such witness is good against any amount of negative testimony. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established."

Probably every one of you would say -- "I have seen some good witnesses on whom I am bound to rely." One evening while I was in N.Y., a Christian lady introduced to me her husband, then in an anxious state of mind, and soon afterwards converted. Then he said to me -- "I have been from early youth skeptically inclined, but my wife has made it impossible for me to become a skeptic. Before me continually was her holy life and her wise and timely conversation, always convincing me and compelling me to believe the gospel a reality. Hers was a constant testimony. I could not gainsay it; I could not disbelieve the gospel in the face of such evidence of its power." So he said to me. Ought not such testimony to be conclusive?

But many of you are saying -- "I am no skeptic. but I am not ready yet to become a Christian. I cannot make up my mind to begin yet." At one of the meetings in N.Y last winter, the captain of the Brig that spoke the steamer, Central America, just before she went to the bottom of the Atlantic, rose and gave a brief account of that event. Just before nightfall, as the brig came near enough to see the situation of the Central America, her captain saw that something was wrong, therefore bore down towards her to offer his aid. Hauling up near enough to be heard, he put his trumpet to his lips and shouted -- "Can I render you any assistance?" The steamer's captain shouted back -- "Lay by me till morning." Again the brig's captain cried -- "Shall I not render you some assistance?" The second time and again the

third, the steamer returned the same answer -- "Lay by me till morning." "Hang out your lights then, so that I can keep you in my eye till the morning comes." The steamer hung out her lights; but before ten o'clock, they went down beneath the surges of the Atlantic.

That, said the captain as he spoke in the meeting, is just what I have been doing in the salvation of my soul. Jesus shouted to me in my distress -- Shall I come near and render you some assistance? But I only answered -- "Lay by me till morning." But when the steamer went down to the bottom and I thought of her captain's cry -- "Lay by me till morning," it made such an impression on my mind, that I said, I cannot wait any longer, lest my vessel go down beneath the fearful billows before another morning dawns.

And now, dear young friends, out on the treacherous ocean of life; bearing down on the breakers of damnation; when Jesus Christ draws near you and hails aloud -- Can I offer you any assistance? Will you answer Him -- "Lay by me till morning?" Will you say that? Ah, should that hoped for morning never dawn on you! Who is that, lifting up His voice and crying aloud -- Can I render you any assistance? That loving voice -- whose is it? Will you put Him over till morning? Alas! that morning may never come!

## **God's Love To Us**

Lecture VII

July 21, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Rom. 5:8: "But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

What is meant here by "commend"? To recommend -- to set forth in a clear and strong light.

*I. Towards whom is this love exercised?*

*II. How does He commend this love?*

*III. For what end does He commend His love to us?*

### **I. Towards whom is this love exercised?**

Towards us -- towards all beings of our lost race. To each one of us He manifests this love. Is it not

written -- "God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?"

## **II. How does He commend this love?**

By giving His Son to die for us. By giving one who was a Son and a Son well-beloved. It is written that God "gave Him a ransom for all;" and that "He tasted death for every man." We are not to suppose that He died for the sum total of mankind in such a sense that His death is not truly for each one in particular. It is a great mistake into which some fall, to suppose that Christ died for the race in general, and not for each one in particular. By this mistake, the gospel is likely to lose much of its practical power on our hearts. We need to apprehend it as Paul did, who said of Jesus Christ -- "He loved me and gave Himself for me." We need to make this personal application of Christ's death. No doubt this was the great secret of Paul's holy life, and of his great power in preaching the gospel. So we are to regard Jesus as having loved us personally and individually. Let us consider how much pains God has taken to make us feel that He cares for us personally. It is so in His providence, and so also in His gospel. He would fain make us single ourselves from the mass and feel that His loving eye and heart are upon us individually.

## **III. For what end does He commend His love to us?**

- 1. Is it an ambition to make a display? Surely there can be no affection in this. God is infinitely above all affectation. He must from His very nature act honestly. Of course He must have some good reason for this manifestation of His love. No doubt He seeks to prove to us the reality of His love. Feeling the most perfect love towards our lost race, He deemed it best to reveal this love and make it manifest, both to us and to all His creatures. And what could evince His love if this gift of His Son does not? Oh how gloriously is love revealed in this great sacrifice! How this makes divine love stand out prominently before the universe! What else could He have done that would prove His love so effectually?
- 2. Again, He would show that His love is unselfish, for Jesus did not die for us as friends, but as enemies. It was while we were yet enemies that He died for us. On this point, Paul suggests that "scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die." But our race were far as possible from being good. Indeed they were not even righteous, but were utterly wicked. For a very dear friend one might be willing to die. There have been soldiers who, to save the life of a beloved officer, have taken into their own bosom the shaft of death; but for one who is merely just and not so much as good, this sacrifice could scarcely be made. How much less for an enemy! Herein we may see how greatly "God commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us."
- 3. Notice yet further, that this love of God to us cannot be the love of esteem or complacency, because there is in us no ground for such a love. It can be no other than the love of unselfish benevolence. This love had been called in question. Satan had questioned it in Eden. He made bold to insinuate -- "Hath your God indeed said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" Why should He wish to debar you from such a pleasure? So the old Serpent sought to cast suspicion on the benevolence of God. Hence there was the more reason why God should vindicate His love.



- 4. He would also commend the great strength of this love. We should think we gave evidence of strong love if we were to give our friend a great sum of money. But what is any sum of money compared with giving up a dear Son to die? Oh surely it is surpassing love, beyond measure wonderful, that Jesus should not only labor and suffer, but should really die! Was ever love like this!
- 5. Again; God designed also to reveal the moral character of His love for men, and especially, its justice. He could not show favors to the guilty until His government was made secure and His law was duly honored. Without this sacrifice, He knew it could not be safe to pardon. God must maintain the honor of His throne. He must show that He could never wink at sin. He felt the solemn necessity of giving a public rebuke of sin before the universe. This rebuke was the more expressive because Jesus Himself was sinless. Of course it must be seen that in His death, God was not frowning on His sin, but on the sin of those whose sins He bore and in whose place He stood.
- 6. This shows God's abhorrence of sin, since Jesus stood as our representative. While He stood in this position, God could not spare Him, but laid on Him the chastisement of our iniquities. Oh what a rebuke of sin was that! How expressively did it show that God abhorred sin, yet loved the sinner! These were among the great objects in view -- to beget in our souls the two-fold conviction of His love for us and of our sin against Him. He would make those convictions strong and abiding. So He sets forth Jesus crucified before our eyes -- a far more expressive thing than any mere words. No saying that He loved us could approximate towards the strength and impressiveness of this manifestation. In no other way could He make it seem so much a reality -- so touching and so overpowering. Thus He commends it to our regard. Thus He invites us to look at it. He tells us angels desire to look into it. He would have us weigh this great fact, examine all its bearings, until it shall come full upon our souls with its power to save. He commends it to us to be reciprocated, as if He would incite us to love Him who has so loved us. Of course He would have us understand this love, and appreciate it, that we may requite it with responsive love in return. It is an example for us that we may love our enemies and, much more, our brethren. Oh when this love has taken its effect on our hearts, how deeply do we feel that we cannot hate any one for whom Christ died! Then instead of selfishly thrusting our neighbor off, and grasping the good to which his claim is full as great as ours, we love him with a love so deep and so pure that it cannot be in our heart to do him wrong.
- 7. It was thus a part of the divine purpose to show us what true love is. And one said in prayer -- "We thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast given us Thy Son to teach us how to love." Yes, God would let us know that He Himself, is love, and hence that if we would be His children, we too must love Him and love one another. He would reveal His love so as to draw us into sympathy with Himself and make us like Him. Do you not suppose that a thorough consideration of God's love, as manifested in Christ, does actually teach us what love is, and serve to draw our souls into such love? The question is often asked -- How shall I love? The answer is given in this example. Herein is love! Look at it and drink in its spirit. Man is prone to love himself supremely. But there is a totally different sort of love from that. This love commends itself in

that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. How forcibly does this rebuke our selfishness! How much we need this lesson, to subdue our narrow selfishness, and shame our unbelief!

How strange it is that men do not realize the love of God! The wife of a minister who had herself labored in many revivals, said to me, "I never, till a few days since, knew that God is love." What do you mean? said I. "I mean that I never apprehended it in all its bearings before." Oh, I assure you, it is a great and blessed truth, and it is a great thing to see it as it is! When it becomes a reality to the soul, and you come under its powerful sympathy, then you will find the gospel indeed the power of God unto salvation. Paul prayed for his Ephesian converts that they might "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of God that passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God."

- 8. God sought, in thus commending His love to us, to subdue our slavish fear. Some one said -- "When I was young, I was sensible of fearing God, but I knew I did not love Him. The instruction I received led me to fear, but not to love." So long as we think of God only as One to be feared, not to be loved, there will be a prejudice against Him as more an enemy than a friend. Every sinner knows that he deserves to be hated of God. He sees plainly that God must have good reason to be displeased with him. The selfish sinner judges God from himself. Knowing how he should feel towards one who had wronged him, he unconsciously infers that God must feel so towards every sinner. When he tries to pray, his heart won't; it is nothing but terror. He feels no attraction towards God, no real love. The child spirit comes before God, weeping indeed, but loving and trusting. Now the state of feeling which fears only, God would fain put away, and make us know that He loves us still. We must not regard Him as being altogether such as ourselves. He would undeceive us and make us realize that though He has "spoken against us, yet He does earnestly remember us still." He would have us interpret His dealings fairly and without prejudice. He sees how, when He thwarts men's plans, they are bent on misunderstanding Him. They will think that He is reckless of their welfare, and they are blind to the precious truth that He shapes all His ways towards them in love and kindness. He would lead us to judge thus, that if God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up freely for us all, then He will much more give us all things else most freely.
- 9. Yet again; He would lead us to serve Him in love and not in bondage. He would draw us forth into the liberty of the sons of God. He loves to see the obedience of the heart. He would inspire love enough to make all our service free and cheerful and full of joy. If you wish to make others love you, you must give them your love. Show your servants the love of your heart; so will you break their bondage, and make their service one of love. In this way God commends His love towards us in order to win our hearts to Himself, and thus get us ready and fit to dwell forever in His eternal home. His ultimate aim is to save us from our sins that He may fill us forever with His own joy and peace.

## REMARKS.

1. We see that saving faith must be the heart's belief of this great fact that God so loved us. Saving faith receives the death of Christ as an expression of God's love to us. No other sort of faith -- no faith

in anything else, wins our heart to love God. Saving faith saves us from our bondage and our prejudice against Him. It is this which makes it saving. Any faith that leaves out this great truth must fail to save us. If any one element of faith is vital, it is this. Let any man doubt this fact of God's love in Christ, and I would not give much for all his religion. It is worthless.

2. The Old Testament system is full of this idea. All those bloody sacrifices are full of it. When the priest, on behalf of all the people, came forward and laid his hand on the head of the innocent victim and then confessed his sins and the sins of all, and then when this animal was slain and its blood poured out before the Lord, and He gave tokens that He accepted the offering, it was a solemn manifestation that God substituted for the sufferings due the sinner, the death of an innocent lamb. Throughout that ancient system, we find the same idea, showing how God would have men see His love in the gift of His own dear Son.

3. One great reason why men find it so difficult to repent and submit to God, is that they do not receive this great fact -- do not accept it in simple faith. If they were to accept it and let it come home to their hearts, it would carry with it a power to subdue the heart to submission and to love.

4. One reason why young men are so afraid they shall be called into the ministry, is their lack of confidence in this love. Oh if they saw and believed this great love, surely they would not let eight hundred millions go down to hell in ignorance of this gospel! Oh how it would agonize their heart that so many should go to their graves and to an eternal hell, and never know the love of Jesus to their perishing souls! And yet here is a young man for whom Christ has died, who cannot bear to go and tell them they have a Savior! What do you think of his magnanimity! How much is his heart like Christ's heart? Do you wonder that Paul could not hold his peace, but felt that he must go to the ends of the earth and preach the name of Jesus where it had never been known before? How deeply he felt that he must let the world know these glad tidings of great joy! How amazing that young men now can let the gospel die unknown and not go forth to bless the lost! Ah, did they ever taste its blessedness? Have they ever known its power? And do you solemnly intend to conceal it, that it may never bless your dying brethren?

5. This manner of commending God's love is the strongest and most expressive He could employ. In no other way possible could He so forcibly demonstrate His great love to our race.

Hence, if this fails to subdue men's enmity, prejudice and unbelief, what can avail? What methods shall he use after this proves unavailing? The Bible demands -- "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Well may it make this appeal, for if this fails to win us, what can succeed?

6. If we had been His friends, there had been no need of His dying for us. It was only because we were yet sinners that He died for us. How great then are the claims of this love on our hearts!

7. Sinners often think if they were pious and good, the Lord might love them. So they try to win His love by doing some good things. They try in every such way to make God love them, and especially by mending their manners rather than their hearts. Alas, they seem not to know that the very fact of their being sunk so low in sin is moving God's heart to its very foundations! A sinless angel enjoys God's complacency, but not His pity; He is not an object of pity, and there is no call for it. The same is

true of a good child. He receives the complacency of his parents, but not their compassion. But suppose this child becomes vicious. Then his parents mourn over his fall, and their compassion is moved. They look on him with pity and anxiety as they see him going down to the depths of vice, crime and degradation. More and more as he sinks lower and lower in the filth and abominations of sin, they mourn over him; and as they see how changed he is, they stand in tears saying -- Alas, this is our son, our own once-honored son! But fallen now! Our bowels are moved for him, and there is nothing we would not do or suffer, if we might save him!

So the sinner's great degradation moves the compassions of His divine Father to their very depths. When the Lord "passes by and sees him lying in his blood in the open field," He says -- That is My son! He bears the image of His Maker. "Since I have spoken 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." Sinners should remember that the very fact of their being sinners is the thing that moves God's compassion and pity. Do you say -- I do not see how God can make it consistent with His holiness to pardon and love such a sinner as I am? I can tell you how -- By giving His own Son to die in your stead!

8. Christ died for us that He might save us, not in, but from, our sins. Then must it not grieve Him exceedingly that we should continue in sin? What do you think? Suppose you were to see Jesus face to face, and He were to show you those wounds in His hands and in His side, and were to say -- I died for you because I saw you lost and beyond hope, and because I would save you from your sins; and now, will you repeat those sins again? Can you go on yet longer to sin against Me?

9. You may infer from our subject that Jesus must be willing to save you from wrath, if you truly repent and accept Him as your Savior. How can you doubt it? Having suffered unto death for this very purpose, surely it only remains for you to meet the conditions, and you are saved from wrath through Him.

10. You may infer also that God, having spared not His Son, will also with Him freely give you all things else; grace enough to meet all your wants; the kind care of His providence; the love of His heart; everything you can need. To continue in sin despite of such grace and love must be monstrous! It must grieve His heart exceedingly.

A friend of mine who has charge of one hundred and fifty boys in a Reform School, is accustomed, when they misbehave, to put them for a time on bread and water. What do you think he does himself in some of these cases? He goes and puts himself with them on bread and water! The boys in the school see this, and they learn the love of the Superintendent and father. Now, when tempted to crime, they must say to themselves -- "If I do wrong, I shall have to live on bread and water; but the worst of all is, my father will come and eat bread and water with me and for my sake; and how can I bear that? How can I bear to have my father who loves me so well, confine himself to bread and water for my sake!"

So Jesus puts Himself on pain and shame and death that you might have joy and life -- that you might be forgiven and saved from sinning; and now will you go on to sin more? Have you not heart to appreciate His dying love? Can you go on and sin yet more and none the less for all the love shown

you on Calvary?

You understand that Christ died to redeem you from sin. Suppose your own eyes were to see Him face to face, and He should tell you all He has done for you. Sister, He says, I died to save you from that sin; will you do it again? Can you go on and sin just the same as if I had never died for you?"

In that Reform School of which I spoke, the effects produced on even the worst boys by the love shown them is really striking. The Superintendent had long insisted that he did not want locks and bars to confine his boys. The Directors had said -- You must lock them in; if you don't they will run away. On one occasion, the Superintendent was to be absent two weeks. A Director came to him, urging that he must lock up the boys before he left -- for while he was absent, they would certainly run away. The Superintendent replied -- I think not; I have confidence in those boys. But, responds the Director, give us some guaranty. Are you willing to pledge your city lot, conditioned that if they do run away, the lot goes to the Reform School Fund? After a little reflection, he consents -- "I will give you my lot -- all the little property I have in the world -- if any of my boys run away while I am gone." Before he sets off, he calls all the boys together; explains to them his pledge; asks them to look at his dependent family, and then appeals to their honor and their love for him. "Would you be willing to see me stripped of all my property? I think I can trust you." He went; returned a little unexpectedly and late on one Saturday night. Scarce had he entered the yard, when the word rang through the sleeping halls -- "Our father has come!" and almost in a moment they were there greeting him and shouting, "We are all here! we are all here!"

Cannot Christ's love have as much power as that? Shall the love the Reform School boys bear to their official father hold them to their place during the long days and nights of his absence; and shall not Christ's love to us restrain us from sinning? What do you say? Will you say thus -- "If Christ loves me so much, then it is plain He won't send me to hell, and therefore I will go on and sin all I please." Do you say that? Then there is no hope for you. The gospel that ought to save you can do nothing for you but sink you deeper in moral and eternal ruin. You are fully bent to pervert it to your utter damnation! If those Reform School boys had said thus: "Our father loves us so well, he will eat bread and water with us, and therefore we know he will not punish us to hurt us" -- would they not certainly bring a curse on themselves? Would not their reformation be utterly hopeless? So of the sinner who can make light of the Savior's dying love. Oh is it possible that when Jesus has died for you to save your soul from sin and from hell, you can do it again and yet again? Will you live on in sin only the more because He has loved you so much?

Think of this and make up your mind. "If Christ has died to redeem me from sin, then away with all sinning henceforth and forever! I forsake all my sins from this hour! I can afford to live or to die with my Redeemer; why not? So help me God, I have no more to do with sinning, forever!"

## **The Blessedness Of The Merciful - No. 1**

Lecture VIII

## **Blessedness Of The Pure In Heart - No. 2**

Lecture IX

## **Blessed Are The Persecuted - No. 3**

Lecture X

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LECTURE VIII.

August 18, 1858

### **THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE MERCIFUL --No. 1**

Text.--Matt. 5:7: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

- I. What is mercy? And who are the merciful?*
- II. Christ commends the exercise of mercy.*
- III. What is implied in forgiveness?*
- IV. Mercifulness has no sympathy with sin and never covers it up from view.*

#### **I. What is mercy? And who are the merciful?**

These are properly the first questions to be considered.

- 1. Mercy is not to be confounded with goodness, since it is only an attribute of goodness. Justice is another, but justice stands in some respects over against mercy. Goodness is the more comprehensive term, and includes both mercy and justice.
- 2. Justice treats moral agents according to their character and deserts; mercy treats them better than this, and would do them all the good she can, despite of their ill-desert. Thus God sends rain on the unjust as well as on the just, doing good to those who deserve none.
- 3. Justice would execute law; but mercy supersedes its execution wherever she can do so with reasonable safety. Justice is apparently exacting, and omits all efforts to bless the guilty, but makes them a sacrifice to the public good, being in these respects quite distinct from and even opposite to mercy. Mercy would persevere in efforts to do the sinner good; would be forbearing towards even enemies.

#### **II. Christ commends the exercise of mercy.**

If, says He, ye only love those who love you, what thank have ye? And if ye do good to those who do good to you, what thank have ye? Do not even publicans the same? In this, what do ye more than others?

- 1. The special manifestations of mercy and justice assume certain peculiar aspects in him who acts as a ruler. Justice becomes more imperative; it may not be at his option to exercise mercy wherever he would. His office demands of him a sacred regard to the general interests of the community. These remarks apply to God in His relations as moral Governor of our race. Those relations hold Him to infinite watchfulness over His kingdom, to secure a due respect for law and the great Lawgiver.
- 2. But God does not embarrass His creatures in the exercise of mercy by devolving on them the execution of retributive justice under His government. He knows they are incompetent to the responsibility. It is well we are not required to bear it. We are now left free to forgive our enemies and exercise towards them almost unlimited mercy. "Vengeance belongeth to God," and He knows how and when to administer it. But we are fully at liberty to seek their good and nothing but their good, save as God, or the demands of society, may make an exception. You are aware that in some very peculiar circumstances God has forbidden His people to seek the good of the wicked. Of the Ammonite and Moabite, God said (Deut. 23:6,) "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days forever." When God comes forth to execute His law on nations, it removes them from the reach of our mercy. So when He sends sinners to hell, bringing them there under the perfect execution of His retributive justice, we can pray for them no longer, and may no longer seek their peace. But, universally, unless God forbids us to seek their good, we should seek it earnestly. We are to have a merciful disposition always. God has. We may say of Him truly that the attribute of mercy in His bosom is always alive. -- always boiling up from its deep, eternal fountain. He is never malignant, not even towards His bitterest enemies in hell. He would speak as kindly as Abraham is represented to have spoken in the parable -- "Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things" -- where every word is uttered with all the kindness which circumstances admit.
- 3. So human magistrates often curb in their tender emotions. Their hearts are full of love, but their responsibilities compel them to the administration of justice, for they are under God "ministers of wrath" to execute His sentence against evil doers.

Let us here note a very obvious distinction between the magistrate and the man. As a man and in his personal relations, the judge may treat the prisoner with the tenderest compassion, while yet as judge he firmly sentences him to a shameful death. The sheriff may strike the fatal blow that cuts the drop with a steady hand, but faint suddenly thereafter under the fearful shock it gives his nerves to send a guilty man suddenly into the eternal world. As a man, he is merciful; as an officer, he is bound to be just.

- 4. When we read the New Testament we are struck with its broad requisitions to be merciful. In the Lord's prayer, we are taught to pray -- "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," as if we need not expect mercy from God farther than we show mercy to our fellow-men. If my brother trespass against me, said one, how often shall I forgive him? Until seven times? Nay, replied Jesus, but "until seventy times seven." It is your concern always to seek the good of

your enemies and treat them universally with lovingkindness. On this our Lord lays great stress, always putting strong cases and requiring this spirit towards all, friends and enemies.

### III. What is implied in forgiveness?

- 1. In God it implies setting aside the penalty of the law. But it cannot imply this in our case, since we have not this responsibility.
- 2. Pardon under any government sets aside the legal disabilities which the offence created. But in our private capacity, it is only a loving spirit and cheerful manifestations of favor, good-will. Suppose you have been wronged. What does mercy in your case then imply? That you try to reform the offender; and try to save him from the penalty of the law of God under which he must sink to hell unless he repents. Persistent efforts to do him good comprise the true idea. This is our duty to personal enemies. So Christ teaches us to bless those who curse us, to do good to them that do ill to us. To do this, and to persevere in loving efforts to save them, is mercy.
- 3. Our Lord urges on His people the exercise of mercy in many forms and with wonderful energy and fulness. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." He insists that we shall not avenge ourselves, or retaliate, but go the full length of mercy.

In these beatitudes, Christ enjoined those forms of virtue which are among the most difficult for depraved human nature. If we compare these with other forms of what we call virtue, we shall see the force of this remark. For example, we regard hatred of sin, a sense of justice and an approval of retribution, as forms of virtue. But they are almost natural, even to depraved hearts. It is natural to hate sin -- all but our own, and perhaps those; certainly we cannot approve them. Men never can love sin for its own sake. They love it for the good, though transient, which they hope to realize from it. Who can have any complacency in the character of the devil? No man can approve of real malignity. This is the reason why you see outbreaks of violence and summary proceedings under lynch law. A striking example was afforded a few years since in a case where a steamboat captain violated a young lady entrusted to his care. When his trial came on at Buffalo, his defence seemed determined to make very light of his crime, and even the magistrate was thought to connive at this policy; whereupon public indignation was so aroused that the people threatened to tear down his office, and did compel him to administer justice in the case. That sort of crime, men could scarcely be found who would tolerate. The virtue implied in such indignation against sin, is comparatively easy. But these virtues, commended in Matthew 5, are real and difficult. Perhaps they are the only sure tests of a regenerate heart. If these are absent, the evidence must be deficient.

- 4. There is a species of compassion for the offender which apologizes for sin, looking after the protection of the criminal from punishment, and not after the protection of society from outrage. It cares much to screen the guilty, little to promote the interests of peace and purity. Such a spirit we often see among Universalists. All their sympathies are wont to go with the sinner.



They throw their influence in the way of the administration of justice. Where Universalism prevails, it often happens that you cannot get a jury to convict for a capital crime. Manifestly, this spirit is not with, but against, the law of God. It is easy and natural enough for those who mean and hope to escape from all punishment themselves, to take sides with criminals.

- 5. A merciful disposition is never disposed to take sides with sin and the sinner against right. You see this in the spirit which moved God to send Jesus Christ to die for sinners in order to magnify the law and honor His throne. You see the same thing also in the spirit which Jesus Himself manifested. Both always defended the divine law, and most fully honored and sustained it. Christ came to condemn the sin of the world and not to apologize for it, or justify it. Because He condemned it, He laid down His life for it. He would not ask that sinners be forgiven until He had fully honored and satisfied the law by His own death in the sinner's stead.

It is a curious fact that all that class of men, Universalists, who throw their influence against the administration of law on criminals, set aside the atonement by the death of Christ. They do not recognize the principle on which it rests. They do not believe in making sacrifices of anybody's happiness for the sake of sustaining law and government. What if Christ had been of their mind and had acted on their principle? Then had there been no salvation for our race.

#### **IV. Mercifulness has no sympathy with sin and never covers it up from view.**

- 1. Guilt is a condition precedent of the exercise of mercy. The idea of mercy pre-supposes the fact of guilt. No one can be a subject of mercy save as he deserves punishment.
- 2. If ill-desert is small in amount, there is scope for the exercise of only a little mercy. If a man deserves State's Prison for three years, mercy can pardon him for three years only.
- 3. The greater the virtue of mercifulness, the richer is its reward. When exercised under appropriate circumstances, it surely confers intense happiness, but if we exercise justice where the case demands mercy, we fail of the reward. The exercise of justice also, where the case demands it, confers real happiness, but mercy in its appropriate place, much more. We are all aware that when we exercise mercy rightly, it is a special gratification to us, far above what we feel in the exercise of justice. If the public good demands the execution of justice, we enjoy it, but wherever it will bear to exercise mercy, there is great luxury in it.

#### **REMARKS.**

1. How sublime and wonderful is the mercifulness of God! Just think what moral grandeur is evinced in His mercy towards our world! He is not only patient and forbearing, despite of our great iniquities, but He loads us down with favors.

Then think also at what expense to Himself. Suppose a man had injured you and had continued to heap wrongs upon you a long time; but you freely pardon him even at great expense. You give your money, your time and your labor, to provide the necessary means of procuring his pardon, and finally you even lay down your life for him. Would you not think this a wonderful case of love? But, by a

most wonderful manifestation, God gave His Son to die for sinners, showing how greatly He delighted in mercy and that judgment is His "strange work."

2. This exercise of rich mercy must have gratified Jesus Christ. Those of us who have exercised mercy towards such as have abused us can appreciate this. We can understand that Jesus must find the richest and most intense satisfaction in the exercise of His great mercy towards sinners.

3. It is by His manifested love that God overcomes the hearts of His enemies. Revealing His great love, He subdues their hearts and brings them under this love-power; and then, though they deserve to be banished forever, He rejoices over them as one who has found great spoil. As when the prodigal son returned, famished and filthy, but penitent, the father is seen rushing forth to meet him, his heart running over with joy.

4. If we may judge of the happiness of heaven from our own exercises, we must conclude that God's most intense happiness is found in the exercise of mercy, and that this is His highest form of virtue. The exercise of mercy has always been with Him a present intention, and in this sense, a present reality.

5. God's mercifulness must greatly strengthen His influence and power as a moral Governor. Angels desire to look into this scheme of redeeming mercy. They were awake to its first intimations, and as soon as it began to develop itself, they caught up the glorious idea and all the heavenly host were on the wing, rushing down to earth to join in the swelling notes of the first great anthem -- "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good will towards men!" Who can doubt that this manifestation greatly increased their happiness and also their holiness -- their love of God and their joy in His reign?

6. This manifestation of God's mercy must confound Satan and all hell. What can they say when they see the cost at which God exercises mercy! How must they be confounded when they see how their plan to overthrow God's empire by the introduction of sin into our world, has served mainly to strengthen it, by His glorious manifestations of mercy!

7. Some have wondered why God did not annihilate Adam and Eve as soon as they fell by sin. The fact is, He could not afford it. By that event, an opportunity was given Him to do a great work for His kingdom. It was a glorious opportunity and He could not afford to lose it. Mercy was a rich and a glorious attribute of His nature, and the time had now come to manifest it on a wondrous scale. In the case of the fallen angels, He had manifested His justice and its fearful forms; but an ocean of mercy was boiling up from the depths of His heart, and how could it be suppressed any longer? Why should He longer forego the luxury of its exercise? Luxury, do I say? Certainly. So great is His mercy, no luxury can be compared to this. Do you suppose He feels it a sacrifice and an unhappiness to show mercy to lost men? No indeed. It is no less true of Him than of us, -- "Blessed is the merciful!"

8. Those who have not from their hearts forgiven all men are not themselves forgiven. I have sometimes seen persons in great distress of mind for a long time, and have asked them -- Are there not persons whom you regard as your enemies and whom you will not forgive? In many cases, this has been the manifest reason why they cannot find mercy. It is very common for persons to linger long under conviction of sin and in great anxiety, utterly unable to find peace because they do not forgive

their supposed enemies. Some years since we had among us a poor colored man who, coming near death, was greatly exercised about his preparation. I said to him -- Do you forgive all your enemies? No, said he, by no means; I have been robbed almost all my life long of my liberty, my labor, and my very life, and how can I ever forgive the men who have done all this? If I cannot be saved without forgiving my enemies, then I must be lost! I found him in this state several times and labored to show him his duty. At length as I entered his room on one occasion, I saw his face in a glow of joy and peace. As soon as he saw me, he cried out -- "I've got over it; God has helped me over; I love my enemies now!" He was indeed a new man and died in the blessed peace of the gospel.

9. Some say -- "I can forgive but cannot forget." Probably they do not really forgive.

Many get a hope and deceive themselves. They do not fully and heartily forgive their enemies, neither does God forgive them.

10. Sometimes men say -- "If those who have injured me have repented, I can forgive them -- not otherwise." That is not the right ground. God will take care of their repentance before Him, and can judge of its sincerity far better than you can. He does not devolve on you the responsibility of finding out whether your enemy is truly penitent or not. All He asks of you is to feel a merciful spirit towards him. That is your part.

11. The gospel is an illustration of the spirit of the law, for the law requires the exercise of mercy because it requires perfect benevolence, and this of course involves mercy. In His death for sinners, Christ gave us the true meaning of the law of God in its spirituality.

12. The gospel therefore is not contrary to the law, but illustrates it truly and beautifully. God's character as seen in the gospel is like His character as seen in the law, save that the latter omits some manifestations made in the former. The manifestations are similar so far as the comparison extends. You have more in the gospel than in the law, but nothing contradictory -- nothing discrepant in the one as compared with the other.

13. The Jews in Christ's time had a very low estimate of the law. Hence Christ needed to labor much to elevate the law above their standard. We see this running through most of His sermons on the mount. The whole system of forgiveness and love of enemies assumed a higher standard. Christ taught men not to resist evil, but to exercise the utmost forbearance and mercifulness. Repeatedly Christ said substantially -- Ye teach a virtue common to saints and to sinners -- doing good only to those who do good to you. I come to give you new and higher conceptions of virtue.

There is a state of feeling which resembles mercy and is often mistaken for it, but falls short of it. Christ alludes to it when He says -- "If ye love them who love you, what reward have ye?" It is a partial mercifulness while you love only particular persons, and there are some towards whom you have no forgiving spirit. So long as there is one for whom you cannot pray, it is plain there is one whom you do not sincerely love. If you are in such a state of mind that you cannot labor affectionately for his salvation, you prove yourself to be radically wrong. For you are bound to forgive all. Else, how can you honestly offer the Lord's prayer -- "Forgive us as we forgive"? Luke has it -- "Forgive us for we forgive." How can you have the face to say this before God when you do not forgive?

14. It will not suffice to pray -- Lord, enable us to forgive others. This is not the language of the Lord's prayer by any means.

15. Reformers are very apt to be deceived by the exercise of partial benevolence. They mistake hatred of sin for love of souls and to being in general They can denounce slavery and slaveholding terribly; so might the devil. No doubt he abhors it as one of the meanest sins in his kingdom. It is impossible that he should not hate sin and wickedness. He cannot love it for its own sake, for there is nothing lovely in it. He must treat sin and sinners with the utmost contempt, for he is a moral being. No moral being can truly say -- "Evil, be thou my good."

16. It is remarkable that some professed reformers manifest no mercifulness towards sinners, but would apparently bring down curses and vengeance on them instead of blessings. Until they get a right spirit themselves and really try to improve the moral state of men's hearts, they will do little to bless mankind. Until the Temperance Reform took on the Washingtonian type and gave its warm right hand to the drunkard to help him up, it accomplished very little indeed. Then it took a mighty stride. When the temperance men lifted their fallen neighbors up out of the gutter, washed and clothed them, and led them forward in kindness to take the pledge; went to their desolate homes and spread joy in sad hearts there, and supplied wants long unsupplied, then it was that men turned in crowds from the path of the destroyer.

I knew a case in Boston. In a Methodist meeting one cold winter evening, my friend saw a man slip in at a late hour and lean, shivering with cold, over the stove. After service he spoke kindly to the sufferer, who replied with a humble apology for intruding himself there; said he hoped he had done no harm. On being questioned, he told a pitiful tale of destitution and sorrow, and revealed the fact that he had been living the life of a miserable drunkard, and that his family were suffering extremely. My friend says -- "I will go home with you;" then took his arm and proceeded onward, calling at a provision store to order some provisions sent, and at a coal yard to order some coal. Thus with his own arrival came also these welcome and greatly needed supplies. It seemed to the poor sufferers in that home of sorrow that his visit was that of an angel of mercy. His words too and his whole bearing were those of kindness. He said to the father of that family -- I cannot bear to see you drunk ever again. You must drink no more. I had rather be whipped unto blood than to see you turn back again to the pathway of death.

I mention this case to show you the difference between chasing a man down with justice and following him with mercy.

17. I have spoken of the difference in their relations and duties between the magistrate and the man. The same difference obtains between the citizen and the man. As a citizen, one may be bound to give information against crime, while as a man, he has no right to avenge himself. The execution of law looks towards the protection of the public. In view of the public interests, we have no right to refuse to inform against those who destroy property and disturb the peace. Suppose a villain should come into your house and commit murder there. You are bound to arrest and report him to the proper authorities. The good of other families, exposed to the murderous spirit of such a man, demands it. But at the same time, you are bound to pray for him and do all you can to bring him to real repentance

before God. You should say to him -- Come now, you have committed an awful crime; I have informed against you as I was bound to do; but I love you still, and I beg you to repent of your sin and give yourself up to Christ.

18. As a private individual, no man may indulge revenge. Suppose you have been wronged never so much, yet if you cannot pray and labor for the reformation and salvation of him who has wronged you, you are not right before God. If you cannot rejoice in the prosperity of any human being whatever -- if it mars your happiness to see anyone happy, you are greatly wrong in heart. This fact shows how impossible it would be, if you were in heaven, to enjoy its bliss.

Many have a malignant disposition, and seem to love to lay up and brood over their grievances with malignant feelings.

Often backslidings begin with grievances, cherished and not forgiven. You will find that backsliders are almost always censorious. They cherish the spirit of quarrels and go through life elbowing their way along, at odds with somebody always and often with many.

Suppose you die in this state; you surely go to hell! How dare a man live in a state of unmercifulness towards another! It is horrible to live so! You may die suddenly; you certainly cannot die in peace, while that evil spirit of enmity lurks in your bosom. You may have had a quarrel with a neighbor, and are saying -- "If he goes to heaven, I don't want to meet him there." If he should go to heaven, you will not meet him there in your present spirit -- that is very certain. But if he goes to hell, you will meet him there! You cannot go to heaven unless you can forgive everybody, and with a free heart too. One woman who had a bitter quarrel with another was asked -- What if you were to meet her in the eternal world? "I would rake her up in hell" -- was her reply. Do you expect to go to hell? "I have none but the spirit of hell! It burns and boils in my soul perpetually."

Two men, professed Christians, had a quarrel one evening. The next morning, one said to the other -- "We shall love each other better after we have taken a ground-sweat." -- as if lying in the grave till the resurrection would sweat off such rancor of spirit! No indeed, the grave has no such power. The "ground-sweat" never does that work. Nothing but the mercy of Jesus and His dying love can reach this malignity of spirit and cure it; and this cure must be wrought here on earth.

Are you going to your death-bed with an unforgiving spirit? Do you say to your enemy -- He has wronged me; I cannot forgive him? Oh awful state! Suppose I have to preach your funeral sermon. Shall I say -- This man has gone to heaven? God forbid that I should speak treacherously and deceive the living!

But you say, I have been so injured and wronged! You have? And had not Christ too been injured? Yet did He not cry -- "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"? Had not Stephen been injured? Yet hear him pray -- "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" Thus men die who are going to heaven. But ye who have no forgiveness in your souls, don't sleep over your unforgiving spirit. Go to Jesus; bathe your soul in the tears of repentance till you can offer the Lord's Prayer without a fear lest being forgiven only as you forgive others, you should bring down only curses on your soul!

LECTURE IX.

September 1, 1858

**BLESSEDNESS OF THE PURE IN HEART --No. 2**

Text.--Matt. 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

*I. What are we to understand by "heart" in this passage, and what by a "pure heart?"*

*II. Let us next consider some of the natural and necessary manifestations of a pure heart.*

*III. What is meant by saying "they shall see God"?*

**I. What are we to understand by "heart" in this passage, and what by a "pure heart?"**

- 1. The term, "heart," is used in the Scriptures in various senses -- a fact rendered necessary by the poverty of all language. The difficulty of arriving at the true sense in any particular case is much less than you might suppose, inasmuch as it may generally be determined accurately by the connection in which the word stands and the things said of it.
- 2. When used of the mind, we of course cannot understand by it the fleshly organ of the body -- the great central power in the circulation of the blood.

But as applied to the mind, it has several somewhat various senses. It is sometimes used as synonymous with conscience; e.g. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart" &c. It is also used as synonymous with soul, the spiritual as opposed to the material part of man, and here it indicates the fountain of moral action; as "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" &c. We know that when the mind has committed itself to any chosen end, this very committal controls its action, everything is drawn into the great current. Now it should be noted that the term heart is used sometimes for the mind considered as thus committed voluntarily to its chosen end.

- 3. Consequently it is used to denote that in which moral character consists -- as, a "pure heart," a "wicked heart" &c. -- and as that which must be morally changed; -- "Make yourselves a new heart" -- "A new heart will I give you" &c.
- 4. Our text, speaking of the heart as PURE, must mean by it, a committed state of mind -- morally committed to some chosen end. It cannot mean a mere executive volition, but must imply a state as distinct from a single executive volition, and of course a state of moral purity. A wicked heart is a mind in a state of devotion to self; a pure heart, a mind in a state of devotion to God. It is a state of moral purity, resulting from a committal of the soul to God. Of course it includes the affections which by this voluntary committal are drawn into sympathy with the will. The thing in which we are specially active is the committal of our whole mind to the will of God. The rest follows by natural laws.

## II. Let us next consider some of the natural and necessary manifestations of a pure heart.

This enquiry becomes all-important to us because only such as are pure in heart are truly blessed. Hence it behoves us to know whether we are of this number.

- 1. Our Lord has said that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." We may safely infer therefore that if the heart be pure, the conversation will be pure also. The words spoken will be heavenly if the heart be heavenly. Christ affirmed only a natural law when He said that the mouth would speak from the abundance of the heart. The conversation therefore will be pure -- not sensual, not worldly.
- 2. The heart will appear in the life, for by a law of necessity, the heart governs the life. If the heart is pure, the life not only ought to be pure but will be. If the heart of a man be pure, all else will be pure -- all his activities -- all he does as well as all he says. If any of us suppose that our hearts are better than our lives, we are fundamentally deceived. Nothing can be pure if the heart is not; and nothing can be impure if the heart be really pure. For the heart controls all our activities by a law of necessity; hence there can be no variation from this universal law.
- 3. A pure heart loathes everything foreign to its nature -- everything unchaste, impure. "I hate vain thoughts," said David, "but Thy law do I love." Great pains will be taken to keep the imagination pure. Persons of impure hearts dwell on the lustful scenes of the past, and linger round the memories of their sinful indulgencies; but the pure heart loathes these things which the impure cherish.

There will be also a great loathing of impure conversation. Those things you would be ashamed of if Jesus Christ were present, you will loathe now. The fact that the pure in heart shall see God shows that they must loathe evil thoughts. Even if filthy dreams are thrust into your mind by Satan, you will repel and rule out their influence the moment you awake, and will dread and abhor such visitations of evil.

The pure heart has a keen sensibility against everything impure, and intuitively repels every approach of evil as it would the devil. This is an instinct of a pure heart.

- 4. Great prayerfulness is another indication of a pure heart. Such persons will pray a great deal. They have many things which they desire for others, and hence there are many subjects of prayer always present and pressing. Pure hearts literally "pray always" when they are awake, and I have sometimes thought, when they are asleep also.
- 5. A pure heart will manifest itself in great watchfulness, for we live in a filthy world. As one would walk carefully and circumspectly in the midst of filth, gathering up his skirts to prevent their being soiled, so will they of pure heart guard against everything that would defile the mind.
- 6. There will be great reluctance to mingle in worldly society, for such society cannot be agreeable. It will be submitted to as a disagreeable thing, as when you go to visit the sick. You do not go there because the surroundings are agreeable. Some of them may be very

disagreeable, and some really dangerous to your health. You go to do good, and not to enjoy things agreeable.

- 7. This state of mind is the opposite of the worldly man's. "God is not in all his thoughts;" but the man of pure heart "sets the Lord always before him." He lives as seeing God, though He be invisible. Hence, he cannot enjoy the presence and society of God's enemies. If duty calls him among such persons, he will go, yet not to enjoy their society as a thing congenial to his tastes, but rather with a kind of fear and shrinking as if his dangers and temptations were thereby to be greatly increased. I may appeal to every Christian's experience. He knows how he feels when he goes among ungodly men. Ah, he is fearful lest his heart may be drawn away from God, or agonized by the presence of sin against the God he loves. A pure mind, going into the great cities where licentiousness abounds, will feel an intuitive loathing. So, a man who from some eminence should look down on a battlefield and see its carnage and strife and bloodshed, will recoil with horror. Scarcely less will one who goes into a political caucus loathe the manifest selfishness, ambition and false hood which he meets with there. No sympathy can he have with such things. He can go there only with loathing and fear of contamination. I went to one political convention, and I pray God never to let me go to another. Lies were there; falsehood and ambition were there. I longed to get away alone to pray and to weep.
- 8. The same is true of business. Christians will not go into its scuffles and scrambles, save with loathing and dread. What is there? Who does not know what it is? The spirit of the world. Not that politics or business necessarily imply this; but they usually involve it.
- 9. A pure heart is pained at the sight of sin. "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved," said the Psalmist. So all pure hearts feel. As far as is consistent with duty, a pure heart will shun contact with the world, submitting to such contact only at the call of duty, and then going with much watchfulness and prayer. So contrary is the spirit of a pure heart from that of the world, there can be no points of sympathy between them. The one is all holy; the other is unholy, and worldly. The enjoyments of the one are all heavenly; of the other, all selfish. There can be no real fellowship between spirits so unlike.
- 10. A pure heart cannot be a friend of the world, any more than it can of its own personal enemies. "Am not I grieved," says the Psalmist, "with them that rise up against Thee?" "Do not I hate them that hate Thee?" Did he mean that he had malignant feelings? No! but only that as he was in sympathy with God, he could not but love those who loved God and hate those that hated Him.

What is your experience in regard to your personal enemies? You have had opportunity to test your feelings on this point. I have had. You cannot be their friend in the sense of having sympathy with them. Who can be in this sense the friend of the wicked? Not he who is pure in heart. How do we treat God's enemies? Kindly, to be sure, -- with cordiality as sentient beings, but not with such cordiality as implies the least sympathy with their moral life. The Psalmist said -- "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved. Horror took hold of me because men kept not Thy law." How would an angel feel in view of sin? How would the holy in heaven feel if sin were to break out there? Suppose all at once some one in those heavenly throngs should utter disrespectful language against God;



would they not withdraw from him -- as Moses cried out when Korah and his company sinned -- "Get away from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing of theirs lest ye be consumed in all their sins." "Come not, O my soul, into their secret; to their honor, be not thou united."

If you once understand what a pure heart is, you will see that these must be its manifestations. The mind will instinctively avoid all these worldly ends and ways which so charm ungodly men. A pure heart consisting as it does in consecration to God and its necessary results, it must seek its pleasures in doing God's will and in building up His kingdom. Several years ago I knew a Christian brother in one of our great cities who was a teacher. In his summer vacations, he would go into the country, and seeking a retired location, he would set himself there to promote the salvation of souls. He would visit families, get up prayer meetings, and would almost always have a revival of religion. It was remarkable to see how much delight he took in this work. It was the life of his soul. I have known others also who, like him, seemed to realize the idea of walking with God. Such must find their supreme delight in communing with God. Nothing else do they seek so naturally. They must of course loathe whatever interferes with perfect communion with God.

### **III. What is meant by saying "they shall see God"?**

- 1. The leading idea is, they shall be admitted into His presence to dwell with Him, as, in oriental palaces, those who were admitted saw their monarch face to face and enjoyed his friendship. Only a few -- the specially favored, ever saw the face of the Eastern king. Hence the figure.
- 2. The words may bear another sense. They shall see God now by an inward spiritual apprehension of His character. So the Bible teaches. The Spirit of the Lord dwells with those of a pure heart. They are fully conscious of His presence. They see Him in His providences; not any visible form, but yet the real manifestations of His power and of His love. They are aware of His agency. So great is their sympathy with Him, they cannot fail of this. They feel His presence in their secret devotions. They know He manifests Himself to them otherwise than to the world. Often it is with them as if they saw God, even as our senses apprehend their objects, the eye, its sights, and the ear, its sounds. So we seem to receive a new sense when we come into such deep sympathy with God. We have a spiritual apprehension of Gods' presence and character.
- 3. The Savior says the pure in heart are blessed because they shall come into His presence and enjoy Him forever. But more than this is true; they are blessed here in time. They have in their souls a sense of sweetness and purity; they are conscious of loving God and of having great peace of soul and purity of heart -- which, of themselves, work out great peace and joy.
- 4. None but the pure in heart can see God. What would heaven be if the impure in heart were to go there? Surely they ought not to go there to defile heaven! It could be of no use to them to go there. It is safe to say, that would be the most awful place for them in the universe. Nothing could be so repugnant to their sympathies -- nothing so horrible to their hearts. When Isaiah had

a vision of heaven and saw the seraphim veiling their faces with their wings, and heard them cry -- "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory," what was the impression made on his soul? He cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." And not until a seraph touched his lips with a live coal from the altar, and said, "Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin is purged," could he breathe freely. O sinner, what a strange thought has entered your mind that you should think of going to heaven without holiness! What manifest madness! You doubt whether you need a new heart? Alas, if you once saw heaven, you would see that you could not even desire it without a new heart.

- 5. The Scriptures represent men as becoming conscious and aware of God's presence. "Lo, God is in this place!" "The Lord is in His holy temple." "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery which none of the princes of this world knew; but as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 2:7-15) A beast cannot understand the experience of a man, for it is not in him. So "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." Try to make a blind man understand colors; can you do it? Never. You have one entire class of ideas which you cannot communicate to him. So, suppose you try to explain sounds to one who has no ear. He has never heard the sweet sounds of the human voice in conversation or in music, and what can he know of those things? A blind man, being asked what his notion was of scarlet color, replied he thought it was like the sound of a trumpet. So wicked men conceive of spiritual things. The Christian can understand the experience of the sinner, but the sinner cannot understand his. "Himself," says the divine word, "is discerned of no man." Christians have once been sinners; sinners have not once been Christians. Hence the Christian can understand the state of the sinner in his wickedness, and also when he advances to a state of conviction, but the sinner cannot understand his states.

## REMARKS.

1. Nothing short of this purity of heart really crucifies one to the love of the world. After his heart is made pure, you have no need to argue with a man to persuade him to give up worldly amusements. Before his heart becomes pure, your arguments avail nothing. He asks you what harm there is in it? You may plead ever so much that he abandon them; it does no good. You may speak against useless ornaments; it does no good; but after they have a pure hart, the work is done. What have they to do with running after earthly things? Before, they would cry -- "How can we live without this pleasure? We are made to have it." But after they have known God, you need not tell them they must lay such things aside. Their own intuitive convictions declare it to their souls. After I became a Christian, though no one spoke to me about it, yet I was ashamed of my ruffles and of my great bunch of watch-seals and keys. I could see that I had worn them for mere show. At once I ceased to care for those vain things. When young converts obtain a pure heart, all they want in the line of dress and adornment is only so much as will make them most useful.

2. Christians need not be surprised at the apologies the wicked make for worldly fashions. They seek

those things as their pleasures, and they will have them in some form. Shut them off in one direction, and they fly to another.

3. Those who are really converted will be shocked intuitively by things that are improper for a Christian. I say, they will, and I mean that they will unless they are led astray by older professors in whom they have confidence. By such influences they are sometimes led astray. But their intuitive convictions are likely to be right. Invite them to a party of pleasure. They have no heart to go. They say rather, "Let us have a prayer-meeting. Cannot we have a season of prayer? I want to spend all the time I can in prayer and praise. Let me bathe my soul in God." They are shocked at the suggestion to go back and sip at the fountain of worldly pleasures.

4. There really is no other happiness in this life save in a pure heart. O how much happiness is missed and lost by seeking it elsewhere. You may weary yourself for nought, in chase after worldly pleasures, but you can find no substantial good save in a pure heart and in God. Go wherever you please, you find it not. You may go to Europe, to the White Mountains, to Niagara, anywhere; all is vanity. You return as empty as you went unless your heart is pure. But if God calls you and your heart is with Him, it matters not where you go -- to the Esquimaux, to the Labrador, to the Hottentots; all is sweet if God is there. But if your heart be not pure, no matter how high in heaven you may be lifted up, there is no bliss there for you. Suppose an angel should open the door of heaven and let you in. Ah, see there! Holiness to the Lord blazes all across those glorious palaces! All heaven is radiant with holiness!

You, young men, are getting an education; but for what? To be a lawyer? And are you ambitious for the distinction of having your hand in everybody's quarrels, and your heart drawn into sympathy with all the worst and meanest human passions? But you say -- Cannot I promote the great ends of justice there? You will be much more sure to promote the end of debasing your own moral principles and feelings. I can speak on this subject from some experience. After my conversion the whole subject of going into court to engross myself in other men's quarrels became unutterably loathsome. I saw that I had never managed a case with real honesty. All I had cared for was to get my case and do well for my client, and my soul turned away from it with loathing. Thou pressed very hard to engage again, I refused. Now I do not say that no man can serve God at the bar, but I do say that if he has known God indeed, he will not wish to serve in that sphere. He will beg to be excused. A judge in Hartford said to me -- I loathe my business; I am shut up day after day among the vilest of men, and amidst the lowest sort of business. The men who quarrel and fight are our associates. If I were compelled to spend my days there, what a grief to my heart!

There is a nobler office to which you might aspire. Young Tyng -- just about to die, said to his father -- "stand up for Jesus." Blessed brother Tyng! May God give me such a son if I am to have one die before me, and may his last words be such as these! And if I am to die before my son, may such be my last words to my son!

Young man, is not this a noble calling? What do you think of this -- "Stand up for Jesus?" How long ere you will make up your mind and commit yourself to God with all your heart? This is precisely what you must do.

Let me ask any of you who has ever taken one draught from the fountain of the waters of life -- Are not these joys pure and rich above all other joys? You know they are. You can testify to this glorious truth. Does some one come to you and urge you to go into some vain amusement? You say, No! Are you told there is no harm in it? We shall have a good time? You answer -- If you had known how I am permitted to sit amid the overshadowings of my Savior's love, you would not ask me to abandon such joys for anything your vain amusements can offer me.

## LECTURE X.

September 15, 1858

### **BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED --No. 3**

Text.--Matt. 5:10-12: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Luke reports this part of Christ's sermon on the mount thus:

"Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." Luke 6:22-23

*I. Jesus Christ was a very faithful teacher.*

*II. To persecute is to pursue with evil intent.*

*III. All the truly righteous will be persecuted.*

*IV. Persecution driven from one form flies to another.*

*V. No true wisdom and discretion can altogether avoid persecution.*

*VI. The blessedness of the faithful.*

#### **I. Jesus Christ was a very faithful teacher.**

He did not flatter His hearers with high hopes of worldly good, but, on the contrary, distinctly assured them that peril was before them. "The time," said He, "will come when he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Unlike many reformers, He never sought to induce men to follow Him by fallacious representations.

## **II. To persecute is to pursue with evil intent.**

- 1. To oppose and seek to injure is obviously the sense in this passage. The persecuted are the objects of this ill-will and prejudice.
- 2. But you will observe here, that this blessing is not promised, save to one special class of the persecuted -- viz., those who are "persecuted for righteousness' sake." Only those have this promise who are persecuted for their faithful adherence to truth and to God. Men may be persecuted for their faults, or their mistakes, or simply because they fell into bad hands -- yet the Lord speaks not this promise to such.

## **III. All the truly righteous will be persecuted.**

- 1. So the Bible teaches. "They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The inherent antagonism existing between the friends and the enemies of God renders this forever certain. "If ye were of the world," said Christ, "the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, the world hateth you." Such is the nature of holiness, the antagonism between them is irreconcilable. Hence, righteous men will array opposition against themselves.
- 2. The forms of persecution will naturally vary with circumstances. No thanks to men who hate God and His people that they do not resort now to fire and dungeons, confiscation, exile and death, as their fathers of old did. It may be far more sinful to speak against a Christian now than it was to murder one in Christ's time, and in the dark ages that followed. The light sinned against has everything to do with the morality of the deed. In those times of ignorance, we should not too sternly condemn the men who took life and verily thought they were doing God service. Let men rather take care lest they evince and indulge a far deeper malignity against truth and God by merely speaking against His people. The spirit of persecution is the same in every age and clime. Difference in its form of manifestation by no means lessen its guilt. Change of circumstances necessitates a change in the form of persecution, yet many only heighten the persecutor's guilt. Men often deceive themselves, supposing they have not the spirit of a persecutor, when it is only due to circumstances that they are not burning their Christian neighbors at the stake. The restraints of public opinion change the form of persecution, yet by no means expel its spirit. Enmity against God is the spirit of murder against God's people. In ancient days the wicked persecuted unto blood because having the will, they had also the power. Yet by reason of their darkness, their guilt may have been less than some of you incur when you only speak against God's people.

## **IV. Persecution driven from one form flies to another. Driven from the civil sword, it flies to ecclesiastical fulminations.**

- 1. Persecutors always justify themselves by misrepresenting and calumniating the men they would persecute. They maligned the ancient prophets thus as enemies of the State; Christ as a blasphemer; the apostles as those who had turned the world upside down. So it will ever be. Very few indeed will allow themselves to believe that they are persecuting men for their righteousness' sake. But they do allow themselves to be deceived. Nay they may unconsciously court deception. When men love to have it so, the wish is father to the thought. In our own

times men allow themselves to jeer and taunt religious men and religion itself, as if this were not persecution. They allow themselves to be deceived in regard to the character of those whom they persecute. They would be shocked if told -- "you persecute Christ in His people." So they first make it appear that Christ is not in such people, and then give loose to their malignity.

- 2. Probably there is no community or church in the world in which uncompromising righteousness would not be persecuted in some form, and by some individuals. Sometimes church members are specially inclined to this. It was so in the time of our Savior's earthly life.
- 3. Spiritual pride may lead to this persecution. Proud men resent even tacit rebuke. Impenitent sinners are, not unfrequently, more ready to receive rebuke than proud Christians. The sinner will say -- your rebukes are deserved; but the proud professor replies -- "thus saying, thou reproachest us also."
- 4. Rarely in the entire history of the church has persecution shown itself openly, except when it has had the countenance or authority of some professed Christians. The wicked are emboldened to vent the venom they feel by the sympathy, real or supposed, of some who are regarded as Christians. I am sorry to say that ministers of the gospel sometimes lead in this. It was so in Christ's time. The professed religious teachers of that age led off.
- 5. It is in the very nature of apostasy and backsliding to persecute. Such are its legitimate tendencies. Christ understood this well and implied it when He said -- They will put you to death and think they are doing God service. He meant by this remark to forewarn them against being stumbled by finding professed Christians against them.

#### **V. No true wisdom and discretion can altogether avoid persecution.**

- 1. No true wisdom, I say -- for false wisdom and a false discretion may. If men are ready to sacrifice righteousness, they will very probably escape persecution. But let all men know -- the world is still unchanged -- being as much and as truly the enemy of God as ever. Many seem to suppose that the age of persecution is past -- that the world is greatly advanced. So prevalent has this idea become that some at once assume a young minister to be indiscreet if he experiences persecution. But the Bible assumes that this persecution will be one of the results of faith and righteousness. Even Jesus Christ could not avoid it. They said He had a denunciatory spirit and was censorious. In prophetic vision, Isaiah said of Him -- We did esteem Him stricken and smitten of God. But Christ did not court opposition, nor say or do anything that should justly excite it. He knew His position and His danger. They were very trying to His human nature, yet He could not shrink from duty.
- 2. It is remarkable that Christ took the greatest pains to guard His people against assuming that, by prudence, they could avoid persecution. He told them distinctly that God pronounced a woe on them of whom all men spake well, and left them to assume that if they pleased the wicked, they did not please God. It is impossible that true uprightness should be everywhere tolerated.

In fact, this truth lies deep in mans' intuitive convictions and assumptions. No one can suppose that faithful dealings will escape persecution. Not that every man will persecute;

for the word and Spirit of God may break down some and turn their hearts. When Nathan came to David and said "Thou art the man!" his first word was -- "I have sinned." This was quite unlike the spirit of some of the later kings -- one of whom said of a prophet -- Take this fellow away and feed him with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction, till I return to this place in peace.

- 3. It is partly because they assume that faithfulness will bring on persecution that they so often shrink from faithfulness. For example, the unconverted know this and therefore shrink from becoming Christians. You assume that if you turn to God, somebody will laugh at you, or in some way persecute you. You are ashamed to take Christ's name and wear it. If I should now call on all who will stand up for Jesus to rise, many of you would keep your seats. You would show that you are ashamed of Christ, and shrink from bearing reproach for His name. This is one of the principle reasons why men will not come to Christ. There are other reasons; this is one of the strong ones.

This also is one of the things most dreaded by young converts. They have not expelled from their minds their former false notions. For this reason, they dread to speak to their old associates in sin. They know they shall be persecuted in some way if they do. This fear is one of their earliest experiences. They find themselves misrepresented and reproached, and are thus led to temporize till they lose their communion with God -- their enjoyment of His love and His presence, and so, their usefulness. Often, under this influence they fall so low they never recover.

Alas for poor weak human nature! If anybody speaks against anything they do, oh, it is such a blow! How can they live so! Let them read from Jeremiah 20. I used to read it often and make it the man of my counsel.

"O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried of violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, peradventure he will be enticed and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible One; therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail; they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper; their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten."

Under this strong temptation, if young converts fail to be faithful, they will lose their faith and their communion with God. Often in such cases they are not aware of the cause, and say -- What have I done? Oh! have you not neglected to "stand up for Jesus?"

- 4. Churches also assume that, if thoroughly faithful to righteousness, they must suffer persecution and therefore they temporize and conform to the world. They know that if they are thoroughly honest, they must lose the sympathy of outsiders. Ungodly men will not help them

build meeting houses and support ministers. They are afraid. I seldom meet a church really independent, daring to do its whole duty. I never saw one in which all the members were thus bold and firm. Hence in seeking ministers, they look for men who will temporize. Most churches do this. They are afraid to stand by a faithful minister, and face all the consequences. Ministers know this; they know the church will not sustain them in absolute righteousness. Hence they fall into the policy of preaching about sin in a way which does not show who and what they mean. They always assume that they shall suffer persecution if they do, and they assume this, not without reason. I say this not of all; for there are some, I am happy to say, who would take their lives in their hands and face even death.

Ministers who do trim their ways thus, lose God's presence and their own usefulness. They calculate that it will not do to stand up boldly for Jesus. They think to gain influence, but in fact they lose it -- lose it by the very means they use to save it.

## **VI. Let us next look at the blessedness of the faithful.**

On this point the language of Christ is very strong. He enlarges, saying more than simply that they are blessed. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." He would have us understand that those who endure persecution for Christ's sake become exceedingly dear to Him. The fact that they suffer shame for His name endears them to His heart. He sympathizes so deeply with none others.

### **REMARKS.**

1. Christ was persecuted unto death for our sakes. It was for us -- that "by His stripes, we might be healed." Then He stood up for us, when there was no other eye that would pity, and no arm but His that could save. So great was His love that He enjoyed it. We are told it was "for the joy set before Him that He endured the cross, despising the shame." This was not the joy of a personal salvation, but the joy of saving others. So far as the same sort of love animates our service for Him and His people now, so far we shall certainly enjoy this life.

2. The life of one who endures persecution for Christ's sake, is not unhappy, but eminently happy. The apostles were not unhappy men, even when they were hunted from city to city, and made the offscouring of all things. I have been struck to see that many assume persecuted Christians to be unhappy and try to console them. Indeed they make a great mistake in that assumption. For such Christians have joys unspeakable that the world knows not.

3. Those who really stand up for Christ are blessed in it. Persecution cannot make them unhappy. In the midst of gainsaying and calumnies, their peace and joy abound. A Christian in this state is indefinitely more happy than he who has all the popularity in the world. Joy of soul does not depend on human popularity. Holy men could walk unscathed in a burning furnace.

Therefore let no one bless himself that he is not a subject of persecution -- that he has been wise enough or pious enough to escape it. If you were to take such a man and examine thoroughly his life and character, you would probably find him a temporizing man, not faithful and honest in reproving sin. By a kind of suppleness, he tries to make everybody his friend. The fact that he meets with no



opposition does not prove him to be faithful to Christ. It rather proves in him some defect. He does not reprove sin as he ought to.

4. The amiability that avoids persecution is not to be confounded with piety. Generally this is the absence of piety. You see many who scarcely ever reprove sin. They allow those around them to sin unreprieved. When they come upon their death-bed, they will have to say -- I never was faithful to my neighbors and friends. I let many things pass which never should have passed.

5. It is very common for compromisers to take credit to themselves for their success in escaping persecution, while they attribute the persecutions of others to their blunders. I do not deny that some are unwise. But as you find men in our age, a thousand are too conservative where one is excessively sharp in his rebukes of sin. Whoever will be faithful will learn the truth of the inspired words -- "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution."

6. Let no man expect to make real friends by compromises. Those who attempt this never increase their real popularity. The fact is, the masses have some conscience -- too much to ensure the popularity of the compromiser. The men who trim to every breeze are sure to forfeit respect and confidence. If you turn away from righteousness to go with the wicked, you surely lose their confidence. They will not send for you on their death-beds. No, they will then wish to see somebody more honest and righteous than you.

7. There is true and real joy in being allowed to suffer for Christ's sake. It lives in the inner soul, and no stranger intermeddled therewith. No man need fear being reproached for Christ's sake. What if you are? Many think -- if we should become Christians and should have to endure reproach for Christ, it would be past endurance! We cannot afford it. All wrong. You cannot afford to forfeit God's favor and blessings. Your real joy depends on your popularity, not with men, but with Jesus Christ. You need nothing more to ensure your blessedness. A wife can say -- If I only have the approval of my husband, it is enough for me. I can bear the loss of anything else. I can go with him anywhere. So should the Christian feel as to Jesus Christ. "It is Christ that justifies us; who is he that condemns?" One smile from Christ makes earth a heaven. Suppose you are persecuted, and you go home, and there the presence of Jesus is so sweet, His smile so rich, it is all but heaven itself. You look out from under His shadow as from a pavilion of glory! I have often heard Christians say they never were so happy as when most unpopular and most reproached for Christ. I have heard them say -- Those were most blessed seasons. I have seen persons excommunicated for their piety (as was generally thought afterward) who said they never were so happy as then. But persons in those circumstances need to take great care of their own spirit, lest they lose the meekness of Christ and His presence.

8. It is an awful sin to persecute the righteous, or to fail to stand up for them and identify yourself with their cause. How often have I heard Dr. Cheever spoken of in such terms as showed that men really approved his course in the denunciation of slavery and its abettors, while yet they dared not say so. I heard him preach on the influence of slavery on the great revival -- a sermon full of solemn and just denunciations of that great sin. When asked what I thought of that, I said -- "The men who will not stand by that ought to have their names blotted out of the Book of Life."

Do you say, "I cannot do this -- cannot face such reproach for Christ; it costs too much?" If you

cannot pay this cost, you may as well give up all your religion. It will do you no good.

9. To persecute Christians is to persecute Christ. He said to Saul -- "Why persecute thou Me?" Yet since Christ was already in heaven, Saul could have persecuted Christ only in the sense of persecuting His friends and followers. It is so now. And the usual form of persecution is gainsaying -- speaking against God's people. I have seldom found a faithful Christian who is not spoken against by his brethren in the church. When I hear certain things said of Christian people, I say -- let me see them before I believe anything good or bad. I have known even ministers to gainsay really honest Christian members. This brother, they say, is a little peculiar, a little eccentric -- a little shattered, crazy, &c. So it was said long ago -- "He that forsaketh iniquity maketh himself a prey." The fact reveals the low state of religion.

And now, let me come near to you and ask -- Are you suffering persecution for Christ's sake? Where? From whom? Let the question be pressed till you reach the true answer. Observe, I do not ask whether you are persecuted for your faults; but whether the world hates you for being like Christ. This is the question, and it is a very important one. Are we really persecuted for Christ's sake? If you are not persecuted, is it because there are none about you to resist and repel your efforts to reform and to save them? Or is it not rather because you have not piety enough to annoy the ungodly? Are you so worldly that they do not feel annoyed at your influence? Certainly you will not suppose that you are wiser than Christ and His apostles that you should by your superior wisdom escape all persecution when they did not. If you fail of being persecuted, is not this the reason -- ungodly men are not rebuked by your piety?

Young men, prospective ministers, you need not expect that you are going through life without persecution; nor on the other hand, need you fear it. You may even see cases where you will have to take your life in your hands. When that hour shall come, pray; keep quiet; trust God and fear not. There may be violent ebullitions of wrath, but be patient. I have heard men scold and fret, declaring -- I shall never go to that meeting again; but they were followed up with prayer; and by and by they broke down and became as little children. When this change is wrought, they will stand by you as Paul stood by Jesus Christ after his conversion.

Ye converts, did you count the cost and are you patient to meet it now? Do you give up your religion when you go away from Oberlin? If men cast out your name as evil, do you bear it in meekness and patience? Years ago, we used often to hear of the persecutions of students who went out from this place. Some were mobbed, and some were persecuted in other forms. I am afraid of the feeling that we have been too ultra and must compromise the matter a little -- that if Oberlin views are unpopular, we must and may drop them -- suppress them and say nothing about them. This is no way to serve Jesus Christ.

Can you not well afford to make up your minds now to be for Christ? What are you afraid of? Of those who can harm the body and after they have no more that they can do? Let me forewarn you whom ye shall fear -- even Him who after the body dies, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him! O that we had among us more men like young Tyng! God grant to me to have a son who could say thus to me -- "Stand up, father, for Jesus!" How his words ring and echo all around the borders of the churches! That fearless man; God bless his memory! Turned out from one church

because he would speak true and earnest words against American Slavery, he went into another, and still his voice rung clear and strong for righteousness. When such a man came suddenly, to death, his dying words -- "Stand up for Jesus," went forth like the peal of a trumpet. Men caught up those words and have placarded them in all the great cities of the land. His death was honored above any other man's in that city for a whole generation. While the names of those who trim to the popular breeze shall rot, his name shall live in honor; and even when the heavens and this earth shall pass away, Jesus will honor him still. Say, young man, do you aspire to real and enduring honor? There it is -- "Stand up for Jesus!"

## On Refuges Of Lies

Lecture XI

September 29, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Isa. 28. 17: "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place."

All men know themselves to be sinners against God. They know also, that, as sinners, they are in peril and are not safe. Hence their anxiety to find some refuge for safety. They know they might find this in the way of forsaking sin and turning to the Lord; but they do not choose to forsake their sins. Hence there seems to be no convenient resource but to hide themselves under some refuge.

Our text speaks of "the refuge of lies." Yet it is obvious that men who resort to lies for a refuge regard those lies not as lies but as truth. This fact leads us to raise the primary fundamental question--Have we any rule or standard which will show what is truth, and what is falsehood? Men have countless opinions about religion; these can not all be true;--how can we determine which are true and which not true?

*I. We have an infallible test.*

*II. Things that do not save the soul from sin.*

*III. What God says.*

*IV. Many people hide in the church.*

### **I. We have an infallible test.**

- 1. Salvation, to be real and available, must be salvation from sin. Everything else fails. Any system of religion which does not break the power of sin, is a lie. If it does not expel selfishness and lust, and if it does not beget love to God and man, joy, peace, and all the fruits of the Spirit, it is false and worthless. Any system that fails in this vital respect is a lie--can be of no use--is no better than a curse. That which does not beget in us the spirit of heaven and make us like God, no matter whence it comes, or by what sophistry defended, is a lie, and if fled to as a refuge, it is a "refuge of lies."

Again, if it does not beget prayer, does not unify us with God, and bring us into fellowship and sympathy with him, it is a lie.

- 2. If it does not produce a heavenly mind, and expel a worldly mind, and wean us from the love of the world, it is a lie. If it does not beget in us the love required in the Scriptures, the love of God and of his worship and of his people--indeed, of all mankind;-- if it does not produce all those states of mind which fit the soul for heaven,--it fails utterly of its purpose.
  - (a.) Here I must stop a moment to notice an objection. It is said, "The gospel does not in fact do for men all you claim. It does not make professed Christians heavenly-minded, dead to the world, full of love, joy, and peace."

I reply: Here is medicine which, applied in a given disease, will certainly cure. This healing power is just what it has and what we claim for it. But it must be fairly applied. A man may buy the medicine, and because it is bitter, may lay it up in his cupboard and never take it; he may provide himself with a counterfeit to take in its stead; or he may follow it with something that will instantly counteract its influence in the system. In any such case, the efficacy of the medicine is not disproved; you only prove that you have not used it fairly and honestly.

- (b.) So with the gospel. You must take it and use it according to directions; else its failure is not its fault, but yours.
- (c.) It is of no avail then to say that the gospel does not save men from sin. It may indeed be counterfeited; it may be itself rejected; but he who receives it to his heart will surely find his heart blessed thereby. The gospel does transform men from sin to holiness--does make men peaceful, holy, heavenly, in life and in death. Millions of such cases lie out on the face of the world's history. Their lives evince the reality and preciousness of the salvation which the gospel promises.

## **II. I will now proceed to name some things that lack this decisive characteristic. They do not save the soul from sin.**

- 1. An unsanctifying hope of heaven. Speaking of what God's children shall be, John says--"We know that when He shall appear we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him (Christ) purifieth himself even as he is pure." A good hope, then, does purify the heart. But there certainly are hopes indulged that fail to purify the heart of those who hold them. Those

hopes are lies. They cannot possibly be sound and true. On their very face, it stands revealed that they are worthless--a mere refuge of lies. The stronger and more unwavering they are, so much the more are they delusive. What hope in Christ is that which does not bring the heart to Christ?

- 2. An old experience, that is all old, is a lie. You have perhaps heard of the man who had his old experience all written down and laid away with his deeds of land to keep till his time of need. This being all the evidence he had, he used to refer to it from time to time for his comfort. At length, when the time came for him to die, he felt the need of this record of his religion, and sent his little daughter to bring it. She returned with only the sad story that the mice had found their way to his drawer and had eaten up the paper--all the dying man's evidence of piety! Alas! he must die in despair! He had no other hope but this!

On the face of it, such a refuge is only lies.

- 3. There are two forms of self-righteousness--the legal and the gospel,--both of which are refuges of lies.

The legal depends on duty-doing--evermore trying to work out salvation by deeds of law. The gospel form sets itself to get grace by works. Men try to get a new heart not by trying to turn from all sin, but by praying for it. I meet such a man. He says, "I tried to become religious." Indeed, and, what did you do? "I prayed for a new heart." You did! But you did not do what God says you must--"Make yourself a new heart and a new spirit;" you did not repent--you did not bow your heart to God. Therefore, all your doings come short of what God requires. They fail of saving the soul from sin.

There is a great deal of this gospel self-righteousness--this throwing off the responsibility upon God.

- 4. Universalism is an old refuge of lies. And here let me give you a case. Being out from home in my carriage, I overtook a young man and invited him to ride. Almost immediately he told me he was a Universalist and came out strongly in defence of his system. I said to him, "I am not well and may not live long, and I do not dare to be deceived in this matter." He said for his part he was sure enough of its truth. He had heard smart men say so, and prove it from Scripture. I said to him--I have one objection. There is a certain train of facts which I cannot account for, if Universalism be true. I have known families once reputed orthodox, which were then upright, moral, and justly respected. These same families I have known become loose in morals, forsake the house of God, turn to strong drink, and become fearfully vicious. Such families I have observed along with this change almost always become Universalists. This is one set of facts.

On the other hand, I have never known a holy, prayerful Universalist backslide into orthodoxy--forsake his Universalism and his morality and degenerate into vice and orthodoxy by one uniform and simultaneous declension. I have known men reformed from drunkenness and vice, and then become orthodox; but I have never known men reform from vice into Universalism. In short, it seems to me that thousands of facts evince a natural sympathy between vice and Universalism on the one hand, and between

virtue and orthodoxy on the other.

By this time, he began to feel troubled, and said, "I am afraid I am all wrong. Would you believe it?" said he, "I am running away from being converted. There is a revival in my place, and I am running away from it." You are! said I. And do you think it will hurt you? Will it do you any harm?

He looked deeply anxious and said--"Had not I better go back? My good father and mother looked sad when I left my home. I don't believe Universalism can save me. Everybody knows it never did save anybody and never can."

- 5. The same must be said of proper Unitarianism. Some who bear this name are not such in fact. But where you find men who deny depravity, regeneration, atonement, you will certainly find that their system does not make them heavenly-minded, holy and humble. You need not reason with them to find this out; you need only to take the facts of their history.
- 6. So of Davisism--the doctrines of Andrew Jackson Davis. Do these doctrines make men holy? Never.

I have known a man, once a friend and patron of gospel reforms, who turned back to Andrew Jackson Davis. Did this change make him more holy? No, indeed. He said, "It makes me more happy." No doubt; and for the reason that before he was only and always under conviction, never enjoying the peace of the gospel. What is the use of reasoning about his Universalism? Look at the facts! They alone are sufficient to show its utter falsehood. Universalism never saved any man from sin. It throws no influence in that direction. So of Mormonism, and all similar delusions. We need not stop to write books against this and such like lies;--it stands out on the fore-front of this system that it saves no man from sin. It is therefore a refuge of lies--deceiving men into hopes that can never be realized. So of every creed and system that does not save men from sin and fit them for heaven.

### **III. And now let my hearers take notice of what God says.**

- 1. He declares, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." No doubt this hail is the symbol of God's displeasure. It is fit that God should be displeased with these refuges of lies. He loves truth too well to have the least sympathy with lies. He loves the souls of men too deeply to have any patience with agencies so destructive. Therefore, he loathes all these refuges of lies, and has solemnly declared that the hail shall sweep them all away.
- 2. The waters, he declares, shall overflow the hiding-places. Every resort that leaves the soul in sin is a hiding-place. All religious affectation is such, and is nothing better. To put on the mere appearance of devoutness and sanctimony, as if God could be made to believe you sincere and could not see through it all;--this is a flimsy hiding-place indeed. So of all religious formality--going through the forms of worship, being in the church, being baptized--what avails it all unless their piety be instinct with life and that life be the soul of real holiness?

#### **IV. A great many people hide in the church.**

- 1. Judas Iscariot crept in there to hide. A minister of the Dutch Reformed Church told me once of a case in point just here. A man who had been confirmed in that church was out at sea in a fearful storm. It was a time of intense alarm, and many were exceedingly fearful of death, not to say also of that terrible state beyond. When they said to him, How is it that you are so cool? He replied, "What have I to fear--I belong to the South Dutch!"
- 2. Many hide under orthodox creeds. They are not Unitarians; they are not Mormons; they are not Universalists; they are orthodox! Such religious opinions held so tenaciously must, they think, ensure their safety.
- 3. Others hide under the plea of a sinful nature. They are naturally unable to do anything. Here they have found a sure retreat. They are very willing to do all their duty--but this sinful nature is all against them, and what can they do? This is a refuge of lies.
- 4. Some dodge under professors of religion. I fear there are many such here among us. Alas, your hiding-place will fail you in the day of trial! When the hail comes and the storm rolls up fearfully, and the awful thunder breaks with appalling crash, you will try in vain to find your professor--to hide under his wing! Where is he now? Suppose he were as bad as you claim, how much can he help you in that all-devouring storm? If he is not as good as he should be, you ought to be better than he, and not try to hide yourself under his shortcomings.

#### **REMARKS.**

1. Sinners know these things to be refuges of lies, because they do not save men from their sins. Certainly they must see this and know it to be the truth.

They resort to these refuges, not as being quite fully true, but as an excuse for delay. Miserable subterfuge, this! They are not honest, and therefore need not think it strange if they are deluded.

They admit that if one lives like Christ, all will be well; and they know that nothing less than this will avail for their safety.

2. Of course, to seek a refuge of lies is to tempt God to destroy you. How can it be otherwise?

3. Remember the test--this one plain simple principle: That and only that which saves from sin is true; all else is false and ruinous. Now you all have some hope of a happy future; what is this hope? Good or bad? Is it truthful and sure, or is it a refuge of lies?

Does your hope sanctify you--does it make you humble, holy, prayerful? Does your faith purify your heart? Have you the fruits of the Spirit--love, joy, peace, long-suffering? Have you daily communion with God? Are you so united to him that you can say--Truly we have fellowship with the Father? If so, this will be a hiding-place indeed--not one which the hail shall sweep away, but one which shall save the soul.

Have you the life of God in your soul? Does it pervade your heart, and diffuse itself over all the chambers of your soul? Let nothing less than this avail to satisfy your mind.

Hear Catholics talk about the Virgin and the sacraments and absolution; what are all these things, and a thousand more such, good for, if they do not save from sin? What is the use of running after these things that do not save?

But you say--I love to believe that all will be saved; it makes me so happy. But does it make you holy? Does it renew your heart? This is the only sure test.

But you say, "I do not believe as you do." I answer--Here are great facts. You are in sin. Are you saved from your sin by your system? If so, well; if not so, then it is not well. Will your believing it to be one way or the other make it so? Does believing a lie make it the truth? If you were to believe that you could walk on the water, or that water could not drown you, and should leap overboard, would your belief save you?

Dying sinner, all those refuges of lies will surely deceive and destroy you. It is time for you to arise and say--I must have the religion of Jesus. Not having it, I cannot go where Jesus is. With a lie in my right hand, what have I to hope for? None of you, I hope, have reached that forlorn state described by the prophet, "A deceived heart hath turned him aside, neither can he say to his soul, There is a lie in my right hand."

O sinner, there is a refuge for you which is not one of lies. There is a hiding-place for you which no waters can reach to overwhelm. It lies far above their course. O, take refuge in Christ! away with these refuges of lies! Cry out--Give me Christ and none besides! Christ and Him only,--for what have I to do with lies and delusions? You need to come into such communion with Christ that his power and presence and fullness shall flow through your heart fully and freely, and be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

## **God's Wrath Against Those Who Withstand His Truth**

Lecture XII

November 10, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Rom. 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."



Every word of this impressive passage demands attentive consideration. It would seem that there is no end to its pointed and pungent applications to the practical life of men.

*I. What is meant here by "holding the truth"?*

*II. What is it to "hold the truth in unrighteousness"?*

*III. What shall we understand in our text by "the wrath of God"?*

*IV. How is this wrath of God against such unrighteousness revealed?*

*V. What is meant by "ungodliness"?*

*VI. Why is this terrible language used against this sin?*

*VII. Not only does this sinner care not for God; he cares nothing for the universal good.*

## **I. Let us enquire what is meant here by "holding the truth"?**

- 1. This language is sometimes used to signify holding fast to an opinion -- having certain views as one's own. But in this text, both the original word and the context concur to give another sense. To make it clear, I must first observe that truth is the natural stimulus to action. Its natural influence is to lead men to act. It will always have this tendency unless restrained.
- 2. Now the word which Paul used here means precisely to restrain -- to hold back the truth, from exerting its appropriate influence. Paul assumes that the men of whom he speaks refuse to comply with the truth -- this being the way in which men hold back the truth

## **II. What is it to "hold the truth in unrighteousness"?**

The meaning of this is often not well understood, and therefore should be carefully considered.

- 1. The original word for unrighteousness implies deficiency -- a want of righteousness. To hold the truth in unrighteousness, implies that you see your duty, but fail to do it. You restrain the truth so that it does not lead you on to do righteousness. To illustrate this point, suppose that some of you men of business have claims against one of your neighbors. You have sold him goods on time; the day of payment has come, you need your pay; he knows he ought to meet his promises promptly. You call on him; he acknowledges his obligation -- says he knows he ought to pay you, but yet he fails to do it. In truth he wants to speculate on his money. He can put it out at fifty per cent, and this, he thinks, is much better for him than paying his honest debts. What should you think if when you call on him, and ask him if he ought not to pay, he should laugh you in the face? Indeed, says he, "do you suppose I care what I ought to do?" He scoffs at the idea of moral obligation. Could you find words strong enough to paint his vileness? Yet the whole of it is -- lack of righteousness -- the want of moral integrity and unrighteousness. It is precisely what sinners do towards God when they say I know I ought to love and serve Thee,

but what do I care for that? What is that to me? I have my own ends to answer, and I can enjoy myself better in my own way than in God's.

- 2. This is not too strong language. It does not at all exaggerate the infinite vileness of sinners who practically say -- I know God requires it and I know it is right; but what of that?

### **III. What shall we understand in our text by "the wrath of God"?**

Not any selfish anger, for God has none, and never can have; but a benevolent displeasure, such as a holy and good being must feel towards a wrong so monstrous. Would not you be greatly displeased with such conduct towards yourself? If a man honestly owed you, and yet was reckless of his obligation, would not you think his conduct an outrage, and would you not be greatly displeased? And would you not feel deeply that you have reason for the displeasure you feel? Certainly, and by how much the more holy you are, by so much the more deeply and surely will you be displeased.

### **IV. How is this wrath of God against such unrighteousness revealed?**

- 1. I answer, partly, in the irresistible convictions of our own minds. We cannot but believe that God is displeased with us for holding back the truth through our unrighteousness. We know this as a first truth, and cannot but know it. It is thus revealed to us in the strongest possible manner. Our necessary conceptions of God are such that it is impossible for us to deny that God is and must be displeased with this sin.
- 2. Moreover, the Bible reveals this often, nay I might say -- everywhere.
- 3. Again, God's providence reveals it. We know that we deserve to be damned and sent to hell forthwith, yet we are not, but God lets us live yet longer. It is plain that God arranged many things in His providence for the purpose of reforming us. Hence it is apparent, even from the revelations God makes of His providence, that He is disposed to forgive. Some have said we never could infer God's mercy on grounds of natural theology -- i.e.. from His external providences and apart from a written revelation. Yet who does not know that all mankind have an idea of hope -- and of themselves as "prisoners of hope" -- the question of their doom being not already settled as it would be if they were now in hell.
- 4. The Bible has settled this question. The original condition of being saved, perfect obedience, has given place to another system in which, men having sinned, pardon is offered; a system which while it shows that God does indeed hate sin, yet shows also that He has mercy in His heart, and longs to exercise it towards the guilty sinner. Hence all along through the past history of our world, God has come forth ever and anon to reveal His indignation against sin, as in the deluge on the old world; on Sodom, on Egypt and on rebellious Israel. Mark how, all down the history of human sinning, God has come forth in flashes of glory and of power, terrible to human hearts! In every way practicable to a system of probation and of mercy, God has revealed His wrath against sin.
- 5. God reveals His wrath also in that prophetic remorse which agonized the soul of the sinner and forewarns him of the coming wrath of his God. Sinners are afraid to die? Why are they

afraid to die rather than live? Because they know themselves to be sinners, and therefore dread to meet an offended God. This dread is prophetic.

- 6. God's wrath is revealed moreover in the judicial blindness to which God gives up sinners when they have abused His truth too long; in the gloomy death-bed; in the dark despair under which they die. Alas for him! everywhere along his dark way to hell God flashes terror and wrath! Behind all these displays of love and mercy, you may hear the mutterings of offended justice. The flashes of His sword gleam out, revealing His wrath against all unrighteousness.

**V. Our text says -- "God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness." What is meant by "ungodliness"?**

- 1. The absence of piety towards God. The original word is compounded of two, one of which gives us the idea of worship, reverence for God, and the other indicates the utter absence and want of this. The entire word therefore means no worship -- no regard for God -- no recognition of His goodness or greatness. God comes before the sinner, a glorious object of love and worship, but the sinner refuses to regard Him. Ah indeed, he has no family altar, no closet! Mark this terrible text! God reveals His wrath against all this withholding of love and worship, praise and adoration. See our men of morality who never worship God, never love Him -- never acknowledge Him in any of their ways! Mark, do you hear what God says? Ah, back of all this sweet flowing of mercy, you may hear the mutterings of Jehovah's thunder, His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness!
- 2. If you do not worship, love and obey, you are an ungodly sinner, and against you is this awful wrath revealed!
- 3. Unrighteousness seems to refer to neglect of duty towards men -- refusing to pay one's honest debts -- refusing to meet any honorable obligations. Any neglect of duty to men is unrighteousness. The word means short-comings. Perhaps no other term translates it so perfectly. It embraces all falling short of duty. This is always voluntary and blameworthy; just as you always regard it when you charge the man who owes you with short coming and wrong if he can pay but will not. This guilt is at the door of all who admit that they ought to love God and serve Him, but will not. All ye who withhold from God or man what is due from you -- all ye who allow yourselves to live below your own standard -- on you this wrath must fall. If you allow yourself to live thus in voluntary neglect of your duty, against you is God's wrath revealed. If you find fault with others for neglect of duty, you show in this that you know your own duty and are therefore in the greater sin. It is very common for sinners to do this towards Christians -- to tattle on professors of religion as hypocrites and sinners. So are you, and all the more so because of the clearness with which you can discern the short-comings of others. All ye who hold one thing in theory and another in practice -- who know the right yet choose to do the wrong -- what else can be said of you save that you hold back the truth in unrighteousness? Some professed Christians complain of their own coldness and make many confessions, yet fail just as much again in their duties. They are like the man who talks well about paying his honest debts -- who never fails to admit his obligations, but always fails to pay. He can but will not! If this bore upon you, you would surely cry out -- What a villain you are! Yet this case scarcely begins to portray the horrible guilt of the sinner against God! Who of you are in this moral

attitude towards your Maker? Will you pause and ask -- Who?

## **VI. Let us also ask -- Why is this terrible language used against this sin?**

- 1. Because this holding back the truth implies the knowledge of it. Men could not hold it back if they did not know it.
- 2. Because it implies also the ability of obeying it: else men could not be denounced for holding it back and for refusing to obey it. How differently do the scriptures speak on this point from any theologians! The latter are wont to say -- that no mere man can obey God's law. Paul says no such thing. Speaking with special reference to those who had not even a written law, he assumes that they knew enough of God to obey and had ample power to obey. Men, hearing the truth concerning their duty, are not passive -- they cannot be. By their very nature they must have this power to feel its force, and feeling it, to yield, or to resist. The text implies a positive effort to resist the truth -- to rule down its demands. To take deliberately the opposite course to that required is no accidental thing. It is a direct refusal to fulfill our acknowledged obligations to God. This amounts virtually to the denial of all moral obligation and accountability. It is a direct rejection of God's authority. The sinner decides that great question whether God's will shall be law to him by answering -- No. Neither God, His law, nor the sinner's own sense of duty shall be his rule. For the sinner to disregard the known claims of God's revealed truth is nothing less than to decide fairly, openly, to the very face of God, that he will not obey Him. God's known will, he says, is not a reason that shall influence me.
- 3. Be it remembered, holding the truth in unrighteousness implies that there is no inability to obey it. For if there were such inability, God's wrath could not go forth against the sinner. How very different is this from that theology which represents God's commands as so hard that men, very well disposed to do the best they can, yet cannot obey them!
- 4. A good reason for such strong language is -- this conduct is total dishonesty -- a determination to perform no duty to God. It is a full rejection of His claims. It virtually says to God -- I don't care for Thee, say what Thou wilt -- what do I care? I know Thy commandments are right, but I shall withhold my heart; I will not acknowledge God! Certainly this is the very essence of all iniquity -- the sum of all villainy. What would you think if anybody should serve you so? You would feel that you were greatly wronged -- that those who treated you so had not the least particle of moral honesty! If a man should treat you in just this way, and then set up the claim of being fair minded and honorable, what would you say? You would say that so far from being right-minded, he looks with perfect contempt on the idea of moral obligation! It shall not bind him!

To be sure, that dishonest man may pay his debts at the bank, lest else it might ruin his credit, and forbid his getting more money; but suppose you could not reach him with the sense of moral obligation; then would you not say -- he is the perfection of a villain!

- 5. This language is not too strong. There is no crime he would not commit if it were convenient and he thought it for his selfish interest. Who could trust him? There is no crime on earth or in hell that he would refrain from committing on the score of moral obligation. Why? Because

moral obligation does not touch him; he has discarded its claims.

Now what do you say? Is it wonderful that God should speak thus against this sin of all sins? Against him who says -- I do not care for God! Let Him say what He will and do what He will, I care not for my obligations to obey Him!

**VII. There is still another point of view from which to contemplate this sin. Not only does this sinner care not for God; he cares nothing for the universal good.**

- 1. God has bidden him care for the good of mankind, love his neighbor as himself; and has placed before the sinner His own example, thus seeking to lead him on in real benevolence. But this sinner will do no such thing. Whereas God's whole law as to fellow beings is condensed into this one precept -- "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," the sinner applies to God the same doctrine which Chief Justice Taney applies to black men in their relation to white. Taney said -- "Black men have no rights which white men are bound to respect." The sinner says, God has no rights that I am bound to respect. And if He asks me to respect my fellow-men's rights, I will not do it for His sake!
- 2. This is total depravity. A man repudiating all moral obligation -- going, as to God, into universal repudiation -- a known, willful, persistent repudiation of all moral obligation and nothing less!
- 3. And this is by no means a caricature. God tries to get your sympathy and to draw you into fellowship with Himself in loving His great family; but you say, No! Let me have no fellowship with God, or with the good among His creatures!

Now ought not God to be displeased with you? Could you respect Him if He were not? Surely, you would say, He is not fit to govern the universe! Nay, He is worse than the sinner since He knows infinitely more.

Now I put this to your conscience, could you exonerate God from great blame if He were to be indifferent to such a sin as this of disowning moral obligation?

Remember, I am not speaking now of open vice, in itself intrinsically hateful and disgusting; but of declining to obey -- of falling short of duty. What would you think of your children if they were to do just that thing towards you -- uniformly fail and refuse to obey your commands, or respect their obligations to you?

Since God feels thus, it behoves Him to express it; why not? What less than this could He reasonably do? Of the wicked God says -- "Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." You may hear it rolling like distant thunder. O how terrible when it shall break forth in one eternal storm!

Long time Mercy has been holding back the uplifted arm of Justice, while God's heart has been heaving with holy indignation -- so long that you are even thinking He will never arise to vengeance. "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will

reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes."

## REMARKS.

1. This sin is the very essence of all wickedness, because it is the mind resisting the truth and refusing obedience to it when most pressed to obey. It involves therefore the utmost dishonesty. It is withholding your good will from the universe.

Sinner, did you ever think of this, when you refuse to work for God and to feel with Him for the good of the universe -- what if my refusal should really frustrate His benevolent plans? What then? Would not that be an infinite mischief, an untold calamity? But if you refuse to work with Him -- if you set yourself against His plans, no thanks to you that your course does not frustrate all God's benevolence towards the universe! So far as you can do it, it is done, and you have the responsibility of doing all you can to make the universe infinitely wretched, both God and all His creatures.

You think it would be very hard in God to shut you out of heaven -- to say to you as to the rich man, "Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things -- and there are no more for thee!" But why should not He do this? You do not love God's happiness, nor that of your fellow men. You flatly disown all your obligations to do either. You refuse to seek your neighbor's good; no thanks to you if he does not lie down in everlasting sorrow.

Of course in holding back the truth, you set the worst example possible, for more men lose their souls by neglect than by open vice. To set them this example therefore is to tempt them in their weakest, most susceptible point.

2. The more enlightened men are, the greater is their guilt. Sometimes I have had such views of the sins of many here in this matter, that I cannot think of preaching anything else. Some say -- No place like Oberlin -- such Sabbaths, such religious privileges! Yet for all this, it may be the wickedest place on earth, just because it is so highly favored of God with gospel light.

The Jews thought there was nothing like their beloved city -- "beautiful for its situation, the joy of the whole earth;" but yet how terribly did God pour out the vials of His wrath even on that once holy city! He punished them as He rarely ever punished any other nation. Men often bless themselves for their morality and for their gospel privileges; yet who can measure the guilt of those that know their duty so well, yet will not do it! They are like those who will not pay their debts, yet boast of being very moral and very civil. Hear them boast -- We do nothing very bad; to be sure we never mean to pay out debts, but we are not openly vicious. What would you say of such hypocrites? More than once, when I have attended meetings and have heard Christians confess their backslidings, I have asked -- Do you mean to defend that? Do you intend to go on living so? It is awful to hear men say -- "We know our duty, but we do not do it." Especially so, when they make great professions also, and insist that they hope in Christ. How shocking to hear one confess, as I once heard a man, "Lord, we have sinned against Thee all the day tomorrow; O Lord, forgive us!" What does this mean? Does he assume that he cannot help it? If this be true, why does God condemn men for holding the truth in unrighteousness? I know very well he would have said -- "O, I do as well as I can." If that is true, why does he confess that he is not doing as well as he can -- that is -- why does he confess his sin? Can God respect those who say they are sinning all the time when they do not believe it to be so?

On this point men stop their enquires just where they should not. Certainly they ought to pursue the enquiry till they ascertain what is not sin. For example your neighbor says -- "You owe me." You reply -- "Perhaps not; let us see." You go on and examine till you find how the case is. So you should. So men should do towards God. But suppose you find that you owe your neighbor, and then you stop there and refuse to pay. That is the most provoking place to stop -- the whole question of debt and consequently of duty, being settled, but nothing more done. This is the way many treat God -- the way they shamefully abuse Him!

O sinner; never more complain of your fellow men for not fulfilling their obligations to you while you deny yours to God! Say to yourself -- "It will be soon enough for me to complain of any creature in the universe when I have ceased to repudiate my obligations to God! How can I stand before this appalling fact! Certainly I know I ought to be treated as the universal enemy of God and all the good."

Indeed, if the sinner's eyes were open, he would see God's awful wrath kindling up ready to burst upon his guilty head.

Backslider, is it you? How old is your love? Ye who once plighted your faith and gave to God your right hand, where are you? Have you gone back to sin and shame? God calling after you and you fleeing -- what shall He say to you? Even now His voice rings in your ear -- "Return, O backsliding daughter, for I am married to you." And where are you? Gone after other lovers! Oh shame! What can be more dishonorable -- more shameful!

3. You can see why it is that many persons here seem to grow more and more hardened in sin. It is because they take no action under the pressure of truth upon their heart and conscience. Is it any wonder that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all such sinners? Think now, will you do the very same thing again today? Again, will you practically say -- "I know my duty, but I will not do it." You recollect that Pollock represents the sinner wailing in hell, as hearing continually an echoing response to his agonizing groans -- "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not." This, O sinner must be the answer forever to all your wailings of sorrow in the world or woe. Sometimes the image of some one, once a dear friend on earth, will come up before my mind as he drinks of the cup of everlasting woe, and I see him fleeing to escape, but the waves of damnation follow hard after him and he is overwhelmed before them! Alas that he did not yield his soul to the claims of truth when he might! I have not often preached on the subject of God's eternal wrath against sinners. Perhaps I have not preached about it as much as I ought to have done. O sinner, when that dreadful wrath shall have fully come, whither can you flee for succor and where can you hide?

While I was in New York many years ago I had a dream which made a strong impression on my mind. I never give heed at all to dreams, save as they serve to impress great truths; then they are of real use. In this dream, I heard awful thunders in one direction. Going to look out upon the face of the sky in that quarter, I was startled to find that the awful cloud had wholly overspread the sky and the thunders rolled from every quarter -- the whole heavens seeming to be a burning mass of flame. Turning my eye downward to the earth, I saw the public square and all the streets, far as the eye could reach, crowded full of men and women, on their knees, wailing in utter agony and terror. I rushed out and pressed my way among them to offer Christ to their agonized souls. Look here, said I, how can you

know but you may find mercy in Jesus, even now! Possibly it may yet be in time! But to my amazement and grief, not one would hear me! Alas! Despair was upon them! Her iron grasp had seized upon their souls and there was no escape. Then I saw as I never had before, why sinners cannot and will not repent in the world of despair.

4. I sometimes hear persons sneer at the idea of "the wrath of the Lamb." May God help them see their madness! If the Lamb of God who dies for sinners becomes the Lion of His wrath, so much the more awful must His vengeance be! Sinner, will you still go on, resisting all the claims of God and holding back His truth so that it shall never save your soul? Having done this all your life thus far, will you do it yet again? How awful! Before God, I charge you today with the great crime of all crimes -- holding back the truth of God from its legitimate influence on your soul. Do you ask what truth? This: Salvation possible today -- offered freely to your dying soul. God calling for the free consecration of your heart, and you refusing. God saying, Come; and your soul responding, No! No salvation, no yielding of my heart to Jesus! When Jesus lifts up His melting voice, saying, "Come unto Me for life," you answer No; Thou shalt not have my heart; Thou shalt not have my soul." This is your ground. All the day long, this is your position. "I will not give God my heart. I will not have salvation at such a price." O how unutterably horrible!

## **Abiding In Christ And Not Sinning**

Lecture XIII

December 22, 1858

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--1 John 3:5, 6: "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."

*I. The course of thought in this passage is exceedingly significant.*

*II. Understand what it is to be in Christ.*

*III. We must sink into Christ.*

*IV. One cannot live in sin while he abides in Christ.*

*V. All sin is voluntary disobedience and cannot be anything else.*

*VI. When we sin, we are no longer in Christ, but out of Christ.*



*VII. How can we attain to this peculiar and soul-transforming union?*

**I. The course of thought in this passage is exceedingly significant.**

- 1. First, John affirms one of the plainest truths in the whole gospel system, viz. that Jesus Christ came in human flesh to take away our sins. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." This first truth of the gospel he might well introduce with the words--"Ye know"--for no Christian could be supposed to be ignorant of this.
- 2. He next advances to another fact in the gospel system--"In him, Christ, was no sin." He must needs be himself sinless--else he could not be adapted to save his people from their sins. His example must shine in the glory of a sinless purity; he must have no sin of his own to de-bar him from communion with the Father.
- 3. The next step in the chain of thought is that whosoever abideth in the sinless One cannot be sinning himself. To come into relations so close, so intimate, with Jesus Christ is utterly incompatible with present actual sinning. He that is now sinning knows not Christ as his Savior--"hath not seen him neither known him." Precisely this is what John affirms.

He who abides in Christ is not sinning; he doth not commit sin. This is plainly declared.

**II. Hence it becomes of the utmost consequence, first, to understand what it is to be in Christ.**

On this point our notions should be, not loose and vague, but clear and definite. It must be, to the real Christian life, a matter of untold importance.

- 1. Being in Christ implies that we are out of ourselves, in the sense in which selfish men are in themselves. It implies that we renounce ourselves as to any will or way of our own. A selfish heart regards itself and its own interests as supreme. The selfish man lives to himself. Self is the precise end for which he lives, labors, plans and cares. Hence, concisely speaking, he is in himself. But to be in Christ, he must cease to live and to be in himself, and must in the same sense, come to be and to live, in Christ.
- 2. Being in Christ implies that we commit ourselves to him, to be pardoned by his blood, quickened by his grace, controlled by his will. I often think we are so much in the habit of using these terms--"commit myself to Christ;" "consecrate myself to him"--that we come to miss the sense; perhaps we learn to slip over it without getting a full impression, and it may be, without any just impression of the rich and intense meaning. Who that has once felt its full significance does not see that it amounts to far more than that loose notion that so often goes with the phrase?
- 3. To commit yourself to Christ, implies that you merge yourself in him--make him your end of life--make his glory your supreme end in all you do. You merge your will in his will, so that, apart from his, you have no will of your own. You wish for nothing, save what pleases him.

In some human relations, we have an approximation to this. One so merges himself in the will of another as to think nothing of his own will. The subordinate officer so merges his own will in the will of his commander that he seeks only to learn and to carry out his will. In times of peril, where safety depends on the energetic action of one leading mind--that, say of a sea-captain in a storm, his men think of nothing but to hang upon his will, catch its intimations and hasten to obey.

**III. Of course these are only faint illustrations, for we must sink into Christ in a far higher sense than we ever should, or safely can, into any other being.**

- 1. Again, it implies that we take refuge in Him. In many beautiful passages of Scripture, the Christian is represented as taking refuge in Jesus Christ. He is a great rock which casts its grateful shadow in a very desert land; or a jutting rock, cleft on the mountain side, under which one may find shelter from the storm; or a strong tower into which the righteous runs and is safe. So faith takes refuge in him from all the evils of this evil world, and from the more dire wrath that is to come! Faith seeks refuge in him as an atoning sacrifice--as one who has laid his life down for the sins of the world; also as a righteous Advocate before God who always prevails and who will surely plead our cause.
- 2. So the believer, by faith, loses himself in Christ. He no longer appears as one making atonement for his past sins; he thinks of no such thing, nor does he appear as his own advocate before God; he dares not--would not; it is enough for him that he has Jesus Christ.
- 3. In some respects the wife loses herself in her husband. According to the law of some countries, she is no longer known in law; she relinquishes her name, her property under certain contingencies, and is known only as being in him. True, some of these laws may have gone too far and may have become odious and offensive; yet as an illustration of the point in hand, they are none the less pertinent. None need fear that they shall be too entirely lost in Christ. To be lost in him is man's highest peace and glory.
- 4. Again, this relation to Christ accepts him as our "Paracletus," in the sense of 1 John 2:1--"If any man sin, we have a Paracletos with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." This significant term denotes a next friend, a legal advocate who pleads your cause and who appears for us before the courts. This is a most beautiful figure. Christ takes his people into himself; hides them in himself so that he appears for them and they are not seen. How expressive!
- 5. Again, by Scripture figure, we are in him as members of his body. He is the Head--the great center and fountain of nervous energy; from which the vital currents flow out to every member of the body. Thus to be in Christ is to be constantly supplied with life-power from him, our Head.
- 6. It implies, of course, that we are fully possessed and controlled by his presence. The old self is dead and Christ becomes our life. This is one of the most common figures used in Scripture.

Now to those who have never passed through the outer courts into the inner sanctuary of the great spiritual temple, this may seem all dark. Some seem to suppose that the ancient

temple did not prefigure our earthly relationships to Christ, but only the heavenly, and therefore they do not once dream that they are permitted now to enter into the holy of Holies. They content themselves to live as the ancient Jews did--drawing never any nearer than the outer court and never assuming it possible for them while they live on earth to have free access within the veil to the very presence-chamber of Jehovah. They forget that the veil of that temple has been rent in twain, and that the fullest possible access is offered now to all Christ's people

"He that abideth thus in him sinneth not."

- 7. I understand this to be true in the sense that his disposition to sin is taken away, and his mind is drawn into the opposite attitude--that of true love to God and obedience. He no longer has a selfish disposition; the moral attitude of his soul is reversed.
- 8. Again, it is true in the sense that, abiding in Christ, we live a life of faith. The heart depends on Christ for its strength, moment by moment, as little children live a life of faith on their parents, while they are drawn by love and live in constant trust. See when the father enters the room, the little ones run to meet him for a smile and a caress. They expect their daily bread from his hands. More yet, their hungry souls live on the tokens of his love and approbation. This is faith working by love. So the Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ. There is no life to him, out of Christ. The fact is, there is a wonderful difference between living on one's self and living on Christ. He who lives on himself is forever anxious, restive, as one who is conscious of being too weak to bear his own burdens; but he who lives on Christ is out of weakness made strong with a strength all above his own. He knows what it is to repose on Christ.

#### **IV. One cannot live in sin while he abides in Christ, because so to abide implies a life of love.**

- 1. This inexpressibly near and precious relation to Christ, called "abiding in him," must surely include love to him as the ruling element. You are in Christ as friend is one with friend. Thus in him, you honor his name, love his character, devote yourself to his interests. To do this is to be controlled by love.
- 2. The spirit of love goes to keeping Christ's commandments. Our Lord said--"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me,"--implying that obedience is the natural and necessary outgrowth of love. It should be always understood that love is the underlying principle of all obedience--nothing is obedience but that which springs from love. On the other hand, we cannot disobey so long as love rules the heart.
- 3. To be in Christ, therefore, is a state of mind which by its own nature excludes sin. Some strangely suppose that they are in Christ as a sort of Federal Head--a representative, in this governmental sense. In this way, they suppose themselves to have an "imputed righteousness"--and to have this, whether they have any personal righteousness or not. I fear they will not be likely to have any other, unless they come to know him in a more intimate and heart-affecting relation. True, there is a sense in which we are in Christ as our Head--as has been already indicated in our reference to the Bible figure which makes him the head and his

people members of his body.

**V. It must not be forgotten that all sin is voluntary disobedience and cannot be anything else.**

To make anything else sin, is to talk nonsense. Living in Christ, therefore, must exclude sinning.

- 1. It is generally admitted that this text means so much as this--Those who abide in Christ do not sin habitually; --although there are some who would not say this, for they hold that one may be in Christ and yet live a long time in constant sinning. But in my view this text must mean more than that men do not sin habitually. If John had meant only this, why did he not say this?
- 2. Besides, abiding in Christ must be more than this, else it does not meet our wants. We need something better and more than being kept from sinning habitually. We need something that will save us really from sinning. Nothing less can supply the great want of our fallen life.
- 3. In the case of one who truly abides in Christ in the exercise of a living, active faith, to sin--to disobey God--involves a contradiction in terms. To say that one sins while in the exercise of faith and of love, is absurd. Thus the Bible testifies:--"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"--not merely ought to be, but is. So throughout the Bible. I know not one passage, descriptive of being in Christ, which does not imply living without sin. If it were otherwise--if faith in Christ for salvation from sin left the soul yet in sin, then is faith in Christ a failure; for being in Christ by faith has for its special object, victory over sin. And faith is declared to be that which gives the victory over the world. (1 John 5:4)

**VI. Hence when we sin, we are no longer in Christ, but out of Christ.**

- 1. This is implied in the text, and it equally follows from the very nature of being in him.

I am often amazed that people should think they have faith when they have not even so much as conviction of the great truths pertaining to Christ. To be in Christ, men must not only know and feel those truths, but they must receive them to their hearts in love.

- 2. Faith holds on upon the sustaining arm of Jesus. Thus holding fast, you are sustained. It is only when you let go that you fall. Then you lose his protection, you fail of his support and lose his power. If while you are in vital union with Christ, you sin, then of course he has failed to keep you. The remedy of God's own providing against sin proves unreliable. Reverting to my own experience some years since, there was a long time in which I could see my difficulty. I thought I had faith, but I could see many things in myself that were all wrong--all selfish. My mind became exceedingly exercised and anxious; I could not live so. I even began to question whether I had not misunderstood the Bible by giving its promises too much meaning. I was anxious lest I had overstrained the promises and thereby had come to expect more than God ever intended to grant. I became greatly straitened in my soul until at length I said before the Lord most solemnly--"If thou hast done all for me that is provided in the gospel for thy people, then I am disappointed. I expected more. The gospel has not saved me from sin."
- 3. I cannot say that I clearly saw that I had availed myself of all there is in the gospel, but my

mind was dark and doubtful. So far forth as my preaching was to Christians, it fell far short of the fullness of the gospel. But now my own experience agonized me and in great anguish and by no means impudently or reproachfully, but in the agony of my soul, I spread out my sorrows and discouragements before the Lord.

It was then I saw that, instead of expecting too much, I had expected too little. I had not expected enough. I had by no means attached to these promises their rich meaning, their full and glorious sense.

- 4. You need to understand, brethren, that you may be in a general covenant relation to Christ, and yet not have this personal faith and this intimate union which saves the soul from sinning, because it so unites us to Christ. The ancient Jews were in this general relation, yet many of them failed of the particular and close union of which our text speaks. Many thousands of them did not receive Christ in a saving sense. Obviously they did not so receive him any farther than they were actually saved.

## **VII. Do any say--How shall we get into Christ? How can we attain to this peculiar and soul-transforming union?**

- 1. In the first place do not begin with assuming that the thing is exceedingly difficult. Do not impeach your loving Savior by supposing that He is so far off and so averse that you can have at least but a faint hope of ever finding him. No indeed; for lo, HE CALLETH THEE even now; arise and go to him. He seeks this very union.
- 2. Then the next and main thing is to cast out from your heart all other lovers--all rivals to your Lord. Let your heart go out to him alone. Let your will be lost in his will; not lost in the sense of being annihilated, but in the better sense of being submitted--merged in his will. Let it be enough for you to know and follow his will.
- 3. Dismiss all selfish ideas and all selfish pursuits. Cease to form selfish schemes, or to scramble after selfish good. Be satisfied with Christ and his love; so shall he accept your heart's love and make you his own.

## **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 1858 Collection.**