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GLOSSARY

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

Converting Sinners A Christian Duty

Lecture I

January 4, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--James 5:19, 20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

A subject of present duty and of great practical importance is brought before us in this text. That we may clearly apprehend it, let us

I. Enquire into the true idea of a sinner. What constitutes a sinner?

II. What is conversion? What is it to "convert the sinner from the error of his ways?"

III. In what sense does man convert a sinner?

IV. We must next enquire into the kind of death of which the text speaks, "shall save a soul from death."

V. We now consider the importance of saving a soul from death.

VI. He who converts a sinner not only saves more misery, but confers more happiness than all the world has yet enjoyed, or even all the created universe.

I. What constitutes a sinner?

- 1. A sinner is, essentially, a moral agent. So much he must be, whatever else he may or may not be. He must have free will, in the sense of being able to originate his own activities. He must be the responsible author of his own acts, in such a sense that he is not compelled irresistibly to act

one way or another, otherwise than according to his own free choice.

He must also have intellect, so that he can understand his own relations and apprehend his moral responsibilities. An idiot, lacking this element of constitutional character, is not a moral agent and can not be a sinner.

He must also have sensibility, so that he can be moved to action--so that there can be inducement to voluntary activity, and also a capacity to appropriate the motives for right or wrong action.

These are the essential elements of mind, necessary to constitute a moral agent. Yet these are not all the facts which develop themselves in a sinner.

- 2. He is a selfish moral agent, devoted to his own interests, making himself his own supreme end of action. He looks on his own things, not on the things of others. His own interests, not the interests of others, are his chief concern.

Thus every sinner is a moral agent, acting under this law of selfishness, having free will and all the powers of a moral agent, but making self the great end of all his action. This is a sinner.

- 3. We have here the true idea of sin. It is in an important sense, error. A sinner is one that "erred." "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways." It is not a mere mistake, for mistakes are made through ignorance or incapacity. Nor is it a mere defect of constitution, attributable to its author. But it is an "error in his ways." It is missing the mark in his voluntary course of conduct. It is a voluntary divergence from the line of duty. It is not an innocent mistake, but a reckless yielding to impulse. It involves a wrong end--a bad intention--a being influenced by appetite or passion, in opposition to reason and conscience. It is an attempt to secure some present gratification at the expense of resisting convictions of duty. This is most emphatically missing the mark.

II. What is conversion? What is it to "convert the sinner from the error of his ways?"

This error lies in his having a wrong object of life--his own present worldly interests. Hence to convert him from the error of his ways is to turn him from this course to a benevolent consecration of himself to God and to human well-being. This is precisely what is meant by conversion. It is changing the great moral end of action. It supplants selfishness and substitutes benevolence in its stead.

III. In what sense does man convert a sinner?

Our text reads--"If any of you do err from the truth and one convert him"--implying that man may convert a sinner. But in what sense can this be said, and done?

I answer, the change must of necessity be a voluntary one--not a change in the essence of the soul, nor in the essence of the body--not any change in the created constitutional faculties; but a change which the mind itself, acting under various influences, makes as to its own voluntary end of action. It is an

intelligent change--the mind, acting intelligently and freely, changes its moral course, and does it for perceived reasons.

The Bible ascribes conversion to various agencies--

(1.) To God. God is spoken of as converting sinners, and Christians with propriety pray to God to do so.

(2.) Christians are spoken of as converting sinners. We see this in our text.

(3.) The truth is also said to convert sinners.

Again, let it be considered, no man can convert another without the co-operation and consent of that other. His conversion consists in his yielding up his will and changing his voluntary course. He can never do this against his own free will. He may be persuaded and induced to change his voluntary course; but to be persuaded is simply to be led to change one's chosen course and choose another.

Even God cannot convert a sinner without his own consent. He cannot, for the simple reason that the thing involves a contradiction. The being converted implies his own consent--else it is no conversion at all. God converts men therefore only as He persuades them to turn from the error of their selfish ways to the rightness of benevolent ways.

So also, man can convert a sinner only in the sense of presenting the reasons that induce the voluntary change and thus persuading him to repent. If he can do this, then he converts a sinner from the error of his ways. But the Bible informs us that man alone never does or can convert a sinner. It holds however that when man acts, humbly depending on God, God works with him and by him. Men are "laborers together with God." They present reasons and God enforces those reasons on the mind. When the minister preaches, or when you converse with sinners, man presents truth, and God causes the mind to see it with great clearness and to feel its personal application with great power. Man persuades and God persuades; man speaks to his ear--God speaks to his heart. Man presents truth through the medium of his senses to reach his free mind; God presses it upon his mind so as to secure his voluntary yielding to its claims. Thus the Bible speaks of sinners as being persuaded;--"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." In this the language of the Bible is entirely natural. Just as if you should say you had turned a man from his purpose, or that your arguments had turned him, or that his own convictions of truth had turned him. So the language of the Bible on this subject is altogether simple and artless, speaking right out in perfect harmony with the laws of mind.

IV. We must next enquire into the kind of death of which the text speaks, "shall save a soul from death."

- 1. Observe, it is a soul, not a body, that is to be saved from death; consequently we may dismiss all thought of the death of the body in this connection. However truly converted, his body must nevertheless die.
- 2. The passage speaks of the death of the soul.

- 3. By the death of the soul is sometimes meant spiritual death--a state in which the mind is not influenced by truth as it should be. The man is under the dominion of sin and repels the influence of truth.
- 4. Or the death of the soul may be eternal death--the utter loss of the soul, and its final ruin. The sinner is of course spiritually dead, and if this condition were to continue through eternity, this would become eternal death. Yet the Bible represents the sinner, dying unpardoned, as "going away into everlasting punishment," and as being "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." To be always a sinner is awful enough--is a death of fearful horror; but how terribly augmented is even this when you conceive of it as heightened by everlasting punishment, far away "from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power!"

V. We now consider the importance of saving a soul from death.

- 1. Our text says, he who converts a sinner saves a soul from death. Consequently he saves him from all the misery, he else must have endured. So much misery is saved.

And this amount is greater in the case of each sinner saved than all that has been experienced in our entire world up to this hour. This may startle you at first view and may seem incredible. Yet you have only to consider the matter attentively and you will see it must be true. That which has no end--which swells utterly beyond all our capacities for computation, must surpass any finite amount, however great.

- 2. Yet the amount of actual misery experienced in this world has been very great. As you go about the great cities in any country you can not fail to see it. Suppose you could ascend some lofty eminence and stretch your vision over a whole continent, just to take in at one glance all its miseries. Suppose you had an eye to see all forms of human woe and measure their magnitude--all the woes of slavery, oppression, intemperance, war, lust, disease, heart-anguish;--suppose you could stand above some battle-field and hear as in one ascending volume all its groans and curses and take the gauge and dimensions of its unutterable woes; suppose you could hear the echo of its agonies as they roll up to the very heavens;--you must say--there is indeed an ocean of agony here; yet all this is only a drop in the bucket compared with that vast amount, defying all calculation, which each sinner lost must endure, and from which each sinner, converted, is saved. If you were to see the cars rush over a dozen men at once, grinding their flesh and bones, you could not bear the sight. Perhaps you would even faint away. O, if you could see all the agonies of the earth accumulated, and could hear the awful groans ascending in one deafening roar that would shake the very earth, how must your nerves quiver! Yet all this would be merely nothing, compared with the eternal sufferings of one lost soul! And this is true, however low may be the degree of this lost soul's suffering, each moment of his existence.
- 3. Yet farther. The amount of suffering thus saved is greater not only than all that ever has been but than all that ever will be endured in this world. And this is true even although the number of inhabitants be supposed to be increased a million-fold, and their miseries be augmented in like proportion. No matter how low the degree of suffering which the sinner would endure, yet our

supposition, if the earth's population increased a million-fold, and its aggregate of miseries augmented in like proportion, cannot begin to measure the agonies of the lost spirit.

- 4. Or we may extend our comparison and take in all that has yet been endured in the universe--all the agonies of earth and all the agonies of hell combined, up to this hour--yet even so, our aggregate is utterly too scanty to measure the amount of suffering saved, when one sinner is converted. Nay more, the amount thus saved is greater than the created universe ever can endure in any finite duration. Aye, it is even greater--myriads of times greater, than all finite minds can ever conceive. You may embrace the entire conception of all finite minds, of every man and every angel, of all minds but that of God, and still the man who saves one soul from death saves in that single act more misery from being endured than all this immeasurable amount. He saves more misery, by myriads of times, than the entire universe of created minds can conceive.

I am afraid many of you have never given yourselves the trouble to think of this subject. You are not to escape from this fearful conclusion by saying that suffering is only a natural consequence of sin, and that there is no governmental infliction of pain. It matters not at all whether the suffering be governmental or natural. The amount is all I speak of now. If he continues in his sins, he will be miserable forever by natural law, and therefore the man who converts a sinner from his sins saves all this immeasurable amount of suffering.

You may recollect the illustration used by an old divine who attempted to give an approximate conception of this idea, an enlarged conception by means of the understanding. There are two methods of studying and of endeavoring to apprehend the infinite; one by the reason which simply affirms the infinite; and another by the understanding which only approximates toward it by conceptions and estimates of the finite. Both these modes of conception may be developed by culture. Let a man stand on the deck of a ship and cast his eye abroad upon the shoreless expanse of waters, he may get some idea of the vast; or better, let him go out and look at the stars in the dimmed light of evening; he can get some idea of their number and of the vastness of that space in which they are scattered abroad. On the other hand his reason tells him at once that this space is unlimited. His understanding only helps him to approximate toward this great idea. Let him suppose, as he gazes upon the countless stars of ether that he has the power of rising into space at pleasure and that he does ascend with the rapidity of lightning for thousands of years. Approaching those glorious orbs, one after another, he takes in more and more clear and grand conceptions of their magnitude, as he soars on past the moon, the sun, and other suns of surpassing splendor and glory. So of the conceptions of the understanding in reference to the great idea of eternity.

The old writer to whom I alluded supposes a bird to be removing a globe of earth by taking away a single grain of sand once in a thousand years. What an eternity, almost, it would take! And yet this would not measure eternity.

Suppose, sinner, that it is you yourself who is suffering during all this period and that you are destined to suffer until this supposed bird has removed the last grain of sand away.

Suppose you are to suffer nothing more than you have sometimes felt; yet suppose that bird must remove, in this slow process, not this world only--for this is but a little speck, comparatively--but also the whole material universe. Only a single grain at a time!

Or suppose the universe were a million times more extensive than it is, and then that you must be a sufferer through all this time, while the bird removes slowly a single minute grain once in each thousand years! Would it not appear to you like an eternity? If you knew that you must be deprived of all happiness for all time, would not the knowledge sink into your soul with a force perfectly crushing?

But after all, this is only an understanding conception. Let this time thus measured roll on, until all is removed that God ever created or ever can create, even so, it affords scarcely a comparison, for eternity has no end. You can not even approximate towards its end. After the lapse of the longest period you can conceive, you have approached no nearer than you were when you first began. O sinner, "can your heart endure, or your hands be strong in the day when God shall deal thus with you?"

But let us look at still another view of the case.

VI. He who converts a sinner not only saves more misery, but confers more happiness than all the world has yet enjoyed, or even all the created universe.

You have converted a sinner, have you? Indeed! Then think what has been gained! Does any one ask--What then? Let the facts of the case give the answer. The time will come when he will say--In my experience of God and divine things, I have enjoyed more than all the created universe had done up to the general judgment--more than the aggregate happiness of all creatures, during the whole duration of our world; and yet my happiness is only just begun! Onward, still onward--onward forever rolls the deep tide of my blessedness, and evermore increasing!

Then look also at the work in which this converted man is engaged. Just look at it. In some sunny hour when you have caught glimpses of God and of his love and have said--O if this might only last forever! O, you have said, if this stormy world were not around me! O, if my soul had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest. Those were only aspirations for the rest of heaven--this which the converted man enjoys above is heaven. You must add to this the rich and glorious idea of eternal enlargement--perpetual increase. His blessedness not only endures forever, but increases forever. And this is the bliss of every converted sinner.

If these things be true, then,

- 1. Converting sinners is the work of the Christian life. It is the great work to which we, as Christians, are especially appointed. Who can doubt this?
- 2. It is the great work of life because its importance demands that it should be. It is so much beyond any other work in importance that it cannot be rationally regarded as anything other or less than the great work of life.

- 3. It can be made the great work of life, because Jesus Christ has made provision for it. His atonement covers the human race and lays the foundation so broad that whosoever will may come. The promise of his Spirit to aid each Christian in this work is equally broad, and was designed to open the way for each one to become a laborer together with God in this work of saving souls.
- 4. Benevolence can never stop short of it. Where so much good can be done and so much misery can be prevented, how is it possible that benevolence can fail to do its utmost?
- 5. Living to save others is the condition of saving ourselves. No man is truly converted who does not live to save others. Every truly converted man turns from selfishness to benevolence, and benevolence surely leads him to do all he can to save the souls of his fellow-man. This is the changeless law of benevolent action.
- 6. The self-deceived are always to be distinguished by this peculiarity--they live to save themselves. This is the chief end of all their religion. All their religious efforts and activities tend toward this sole object. If they can secure their own conversion so as to be pretty sure of it, they are satisfied. Sometimes the ties of natural sympathy embrace those who are especially near to them--but selfishness goes commonly no further--except as a good name may prompt them on.
- 7. Some persons take no pains to convert sinners, but act as if this were a matter of no consequence whatever. They do not labor to persuade men to be reconciled to God.
- 8. Some seem to be waiting for miraculous interposition. They take no pains with their children or friends. Very much as if they felt no interest in the great issue, they wait and wait for God, or miracle to move. Alas, they do nothing in this great work of human life!
- 9. Many professed Christians have no faith in God's blessing, and no expectation, thereby, of success. Consequently they make no effort in faith. Their own experience is good for nothing to help them, because never having had faith, they never have had success. Many ministers preach so as to do no good. Having failed so long, they have lost all faith. They have not gone to work expecting success, and hence they have not had success.
- 10. Many professors of religion, not ministers, seem to have lost all confidence. Ask them if they are doing anything; they answer truly--nothing. But if their hearts were full of the love of souls, or of the love of Christ, they would certainly make efforts. They would at least try to convert sinners from the error of their ways. They would live religion--would hold up its light as a natural spontaneous thing.
- 11. Each one, male or female, of every age, and in any position in life whatsoever, should make it a business to save souls. There are indeed many other things to be done; let them have their place. But don't neglect the greatest of all.
- 12. Many professed Christians seem never to convert sinners. Let me ask you how is it with

you? Some of you might reply--Under God, I have been the means of saving some souls. But some of you can not even say this. You know you have never labored honestly and with all your heart for this object. And you do not know that you have ever been the means of converting one sinner.

What shall I say of those young converts here? Have you given yourselves up to this work? Are you laboring for God? Have you gone to your impenitent friends, even to their rooms and by personal, affectionate entreaty, besought them to be reconciled to God?

By your pen and by every form of influence you can command, have you sought to save souls and do what you can in this work? Have you succeeded?

Suppose all the professors of religion in this congregation were to do this, each in their sphere and each doing all they severally could do, how many would be left unconverted? If each one should say--"I lay myself on the altar of my God for this work; I confess all my past delinquencies; henceforth, God helping me, this shall be the labor of my life;" if each one should begin with removing all the old offences and occasions of stumbling--should publicly confess and deplore his remissness and every other form of public offence, confessing how little you have done for souls, crying out: O how wickedly I have lived in this matter! but I must reform, must confess, repent, and change altogether the course of my life;--if you were all to do this and then set yourselves each in your place, to lay your hand in all earnestness upon your neighbor and pluck him out of the fire--how glorious would be the result!

But to neglect the souls of others and think you shall yet be saved yourself is one of guilt's worst blunders! For unless you live to save others, how can you hope to be saved yourself? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Christ Our Advocate with The Father

Lecture II

February 1, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

In remarking upon this passage, I must,

I. Explain the sense in which the term "advocate" is here used;

II. Show what is implied in the existence of this office;

III. Explain the essential qualifications of an advocate;

IV. State some of the conditions of his success.

I. In which the term "advocate" is here used

An advocate is one who undertakes for another, and represents his case. He stands up in plead for his friend, and to use his own influence in his behalf. The office is readily explained by reference to the common judicial proceedings, in which each side is managed before the court by one or more advocates. We must suppose the term is used in our text in the same general sense.

II. In the existence of this office it is implied,

- 1. That there is an accusation against us. We are all indicted and summoned for trial. We are held as sinners, and must appear to answer for this high offense. There is a question pending which implicates us all, and the influence of this advocate is needed in the case.
- 2. The existence of the office shows that the case as between sinners and their God is not altogether hopeless. It is not like that of the fallen angels. If it were, there could be no place for an advocate. It is the case of sinners, yet not of hopeless sinners. If the question of relief were entirely foreclosed, there would be no propriety in having any advocate at all.
- 3. The existence of such an office evinces a compassionate disposition on God's part towards us. It should be considered that this Advocate is provided by God, not by the sinner. Why then should He furnish us an advocate at all if He were really implacable?

Some persons seem to think that the compassion displayed in the gospel plan belongs wholly and alone to Jesus Christ--that the Father had no other than an implacable spirit. But it should be considered that Christ was appointed to this office by the Father--a fact which shows that the difficulty in the way of any sinner's being forgiven lies not in the Father's heart, but in the exigencies of His government.

- 4. Sinners are in such a condition that they cannot help themselves. If they could, there would be no demand for an advocate. If they could be saved upon the bare mercy of God, as some have supposed, there would be no need of an advocate.

III. The essential qualifications of an advocate for sinners.

- 1. He must not be so implicated with the transgressors that he is a transgressor himself. He must be righteous before God; else he will himself need an advocate. Consequently we read of our Advocate--"Jesus Christ, the righteous." It is altogether essential that he should come with clean hands before the great tribunal.

- 2. He must be willing to undertake the advocacy, to whatever amount of self-denial, pain, or expense it may subject him. He must be willing to assume all the responsibility, or of course he will not succeed. For what can the sinner do for himself before the court of the Holy and pure One?
- 3. He must take an interest in the race or people for whom he pleads. If he lacks this, he will not succeed, especially if there are great obstacles to be overcome, and such as demand great labor, suffering and trial. Such is the case of sinners that whoever undertakes to be their advocate must encounter great obstacles--as everyone who had ever been convicted of sin must know.

IV. As to the conditions of his success, it may be said:

- 1. He must be willing to undertake. We are assured that such is the fact.
- 2. He must be "retained" by each sinner for himself. This is a legal term and implies that the party needing the services of an advocate, engages him to undertake it, and agrees for himself to commit his case into the advocate's hands. It is indispensable that the advocate should have the entire consent of those for whom he undertakes. They must commit their whole case to him. If he sees there are certain things they must do, or certain confessions they must make in order to success, as he supposes, they must promptly do those things and make those confessions. They must put themselves entirely in his hands. For example, if He insists that they must give up all sin, they must do it; or if He insists they must repent, they must do it without hypocrisy and without delay. If he insists they deny themselves, they must cheerfully meet the demand.
- 3. He must have some prevailing plea. He must have something to produce before the court that will come with power and influence.

Now what plea can Christ make for the sinner? Can He say, "This is a righteous man, and not an offender against God's law or against His gospel"? No. Can he plead any justification or apology? Ah, He can neither deny nor excuse the fact of sin. Sometimes a criminal denies the fact, and sometimes he pleads some apology, or that he had a right to do the deed. But in the sinner's case, Christ can plead nothing of this sort at all.

Christ as an advocate will use no trickery, no deception; nothing of the kind. No sinner should make the least reliance on anything of this character.

- 4. The pleas in this case is not made on the question of guilt or innocence. The question made is not as is common in human courts--guilty or not guilty; Christ does not come forward to plead on that question. Our text reads, "If any man sin, we have an advocate," --implying of course that the question of sin is settled past all debate. As to the fact of sin, there is no dispute. There is no need of a jury upon the fact. The only question is whether mercy can be given. The question is not at all whether the man deserves to die, or is under condemnation; this fact is fully settled and the sinner knows it. He is condemned and knows he ought to die. There is no lack of real guilt, and the question therefore does not at all need to be asked whether he is guilty nor how much guilt he had incurred. But the question comes up in entirely another shape. There

is no apology to be made at all. The only question is, Can mercy be shown and the guilty man be pardoned? Can the execution be arrested, and can the sentence of death be set aside?

- 5. Christ will not attempt to set aside the penalty on legal grounds. By no means. Sometimes before human courts an advocate appears and makes a motion to arrest proceedings on the ground of some error in fact or in law. But here in the sinner's case there has been nothing done on God's part to be corrected--nothing wrong or in error.
- 6. Christ does by no means interpose because He fears that the Father will not treat you with all the forbearance which your case will any wise allow. But the appeal is to God's own compassion for you--to His own disposition to show mercy if by any means He can safely do it under the circumstances of the case. Our Advocate knows that as to the Father, judgment is His strange work and mercy His delight; and He assumes that the Father is entirely sincere in these declarations and in calling you all to repentance. Yet Christ does not take it for granted that because God loves to pardon, therefore He will be able to do so, consistently with the demands of His government. He knows that God will show mercy if He wisely can--if it can be done benevolently, in consistency with the support of law.
- 7. But how is this to be done? Exactly here is the necessity for an advocate, to settle the question that it can be done with safety to the divine government.

The Bible often brings out the fact that there was an understanding between the Father and the Son, that Christ should do certain things to honor the law and to persuade the sinner to turn from his sins, and then God would on certain conditions forgive. In theological terms, this is often called, "the covenant of redemption." It was made before the world began. It provided that if the world were made--if the race should sin--then if Christ would interpose for them to bear their sins in His own body on the tree, doing so much as would render it proper for the Father to forgive, then forgiveness should be freely granted to all those who would repent of their sins and believe in Christ as their Redeemer. This was the understanding and to it Christ makes His appeal. Hence Christ comes forward and pleads this condition--that He has done all that was agreed on. The great work, at least in its chief department was completed when, suspended on the cross, He cried aloud, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost. All along in the previous history we see Him intent on doing up His work. "Know ye not," said He, "that I must be about My Father's business?" He felt that He had a certain work to do; it was the business of His life and His soul was pressed down with a heavy burden, until it be done. "I have," said He, "a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" He struggles under the burden. He must needs go up to Jerusalem at the last great festival. He must be in haste to teach His great doctrines, daily in the temple, and by night as He retired from public scenes, He explained these things to His disciples. Near at hand were the more solemn and fearful scenes of His betrayal, His mock judgment, from which He is led away, bearing His own cross, to the final scene of crucifixion. These were, all of them, points in the covenant of redemption.

It is curious to see to what an extent these intimations are dropped all along the track of the sacred narrative. Plainly no one could write His history without bringing out

continually this ruling idea--that He lived as one who had a great work to do, and felt Himself solemnly and stringently bound in spirit until it should be done. His disciples could not understand these intimations for a long time, but looked on often with wonder and sometimes presumptuous rebuke, until they saw Him die so strangely, and saw that He had certainly risen from the dead, and had appeared to them openly and re-explained these great things of His kingdom; then, after He had really finished all that part of His work which pertained properly to His human relations, then they began to understand what these things should mean. Christ had gloriously honored the law; He had perfectly obeyed it; yet had He suffered, the just for the unjust. He had thrown a halo of mercy around the upper throne; He had filled the heavenly sanctuary as with the incense from the altar of His own sacrifice, so that now God's law being every way honored, mercy can be shown to the guilty and no peril accrue to the interests of His throne.

All these things entered into the great work of Christ as our Advocate before the Father.

We must suppose also that Christ makes His appeal to His own appointment by the Father to this office. He might say, Hast Thou not called Me to this work, and now wilt not Thou hear My plea for the perishing whom I died to save?

- 8. The things of which I have thus far spoken relate chiefly to God and to His government. There is yet another distinct and vital department in His work--He must secure the hearty consent of the sinner. If you would avail yourself of His advocacy, you must admit that you deserve to die--that you can make no apology for your sin--that no one can make any apology for you--and that you fully sustain your Advocate in making this statement of your case. He must be able to affirm that you do sincerely repent of all your sin, for He cannot save you in your sins; He has made no engagement to this effect and could not carry it through if He had. He must be able to show that you honestly intend to do right as God's subject--that you do truly repent of your sins--do obey God and honor the gospel of His Son, and hope for your salvation only through this plan of God's own providing.
- 9. Moreover, He must stand as your surety. It would be of no avail for Him to say, You do repent, unless He can also become your surety, for else you would surely fall again. He therefore pledged Himself to uphold you and "keep you from falling, that He may present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." He thus undertakes to assure the Father that He will be your surety for present repentance, and for your being upheld in faith and love unto the end.

Then He pleads God's gracious promise, and on this ground urges that God should be propitious. These promises are all made to and through Christ. They all presuppose His atonement and His availing advocacy. Because Christ undertook for sinners, therefore God gave promises and therefore He fulfills them in answer to Christ's advocacy.

God has signified His willingness to forgive, yet will not allow the sinner to appear in his own name. He can receive and hear a righteous advocate, for such an arrangement comports with the honor of His throne and the support of law.

Christ can plead the governmental safety of this arrangement. By the sacrifice of Himself, He has rendered it safe to pardon and set aside the execution of the penalty. The fact that He has rendered it safe by His own sacrifices and sufferings, makes it specially fitting that He should Himself become our advocate to plead for our pardon.

REMARKS.

1. It is easy to see what a simple thing it is to become a Christian. It is not going about to do some great work of your own, but it is simply to accept of God's prepared righteousness. It is said of the Jews that, going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. They did not understand that righteousness, considered as a ground of their acceptance with God, is something to be prepared and provided for them and by them appropriated. I never can forget the brightness with which this was revealed to me at my conversion--so brightly that probably this vital distinction between doing myself, and accepting what Christ had done for me, can never be forgotten, nor indeed can ever be made more clear than it was then. The question had come up with great force--What are you doing here? I had said I would attend to nothing else. But I had a multitude of errors in my views of the gospel and of my duty. For example, I was supposing that I must be a long time working out my own salvation--a long time under conviction before I could be accepted of God--that I did not see my sins plainly enough--that I did not pray enough--had not done enough to earn the salvation I needed. In this state of perplexity, the question came up all at once--What are you waiting for? The atonement is already made--this is a prepared salvation; the question is not whether you are going now to work out a salvation of your own, but whether you will accept a prepared salvation, made ready to your hand. What a contrast! How plain was this simple proposition! There it was, plain before me; atonement is made and an advocate stands ready; your consent alone is wanted. This was just as plain to me as if a proposition had been made in writing and it only required my signature to close the contract. This is the case. You are altogether condemned; you can do no works of righteousness to help yourself; yet a remedy is provided; will you accept it? The salvation of the gospel is all provided and ready; will you have it? I said I will accept it this very day, or I will die. All my self-righteous thoughts disappeared at once. God's method of making me righteous by faith in Jesus Christ, by my taking Him as my Advocate and Mediator, came before me with amazing clearness and beauty. I saw and I accepted, and here I found peace. Then I understood that wonder language--"being found in Him." The union, by which a sinner, penitent and pardoned, is by faith brought into the closest possible relation to Christ--this became a present reality to my mind. The sinner is brought into Christ as into some shelter from storm or danger. He is compared to the cleft of a great rock, in which by faith the sinner hides away from the fearful storm which violated law would else bring down upon us. Not by any means that Christ takes our part against God's government; but, showing what He has Himself done to sustain law--showing His own wounded side and bleeding heart--revealing at once His own love for us and His own infinite regard for God's law, He shows that God can safely forgive now, and thus He lays the foundation for His availing plea that He should.

What a simple thing to be a Christian! O how simple! You have thought it would take a long time. You say, I have not time; I must study; or I must do this or that business. It doesn't need a long time; it requires almost no time at all.

But you say--I have not conviction enough. Yet you know you have committed sins enough; you

know all you need to know. I remember how these notions were rebuked in my case. I said to myself--I can get nothing ready; I am all wrong; I have no such conviction as I need. But God placed the matter before me in a very different form. He asked me if I would admit my guilt and accept of Christ as a mere gratuity--as a real favor, an undeserved mercy.

How very simple then is this! You need only to make up your mind to consent to God's way of salvation, and to renounce your own will and way, and shelter yourself under His advocacy. Hear Him cry--"How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her brood under her wings; but ye would not." How often thus does He propose to throw all round about you that shield of His advocacy! Will you accept it?

Did you ever attend a court of justice? Did you mark the manner in which the client would hang on the lips of his advocate? See too how his advocate feels! See how he looks--pale as ashes--cannot sleep nights--he sympathizes so intensely in the case of his client. See how the criminal leans on him; it seems as if he would hide himself within his advocate, so dependent does he feel and so confiding! What Christian has not felt this? What Christian does not understand it all? He hangs on his Advocate.

2. You see the safety of the Christian, resting on Christ. He has an Advocate who never lost a case. How many criminals have groaned out--O that I had a powerful advocate who could not fail!

3. How infinitely inexcusable you are if you lose your soul! You need not waste time in looking after some other remedy--some other savior. It is settled, as surely as if you had been a thousand years in hell, that unless you accept of this Savior in this way, you are lost! There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby any can be saved. Christ now offers to undertake for you; will you allow Him to do so?

4. The poor and the rich alike may have the services of this Advocate. Sometimes in human affairs, men fail of getting a good advocate and of getting justice done them, for want of money. But here is One who will not be bribed to favor the rich, nor will He reject the poor for their poverty. The one great condition is such as you can all fulfill--"My son, give Me thy heart"--give Me thy confidence. Do you believe that I can and will save you?

The thing that Christ requires then is simply that you will give Him your confidence, and let Him manage your case. Can you not say--Jesus, Thou knowest that I believe, and that I do give Thee my confidence?

The rich and the poor alike must do this; the rich can buy no dearer way and the poor need not fail of this.

5. See here also the madness of self-dependence. Whoever depends on himself rejects this Great Advocate, and flies in the very face of God, as if he could manage his own case there! Alas, what folly!

6. This Advocate opens an office in every town, in every city. His sign is displayed before all eyes. O what a place is this! Think how Christ sends out His people all abroad and bids them invite all to

receive Christ as their Advocate. You have heard the offer. Will you accept?

7. Ye who complain that God cannot forgive your sins because of their greatness, quite overlook the real difficulty. It is not that your sins are great, for He can "save to the uttermost." He has said--"Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

8. But you will say--It is not a sense of the greatness of my sins that discourages me, but because I have so little sense of my sin. It was so in my own case. I was oppressed with the same difficulty. I was on my way home from my office, when all at once, as if I heard a voice behind me, saying, this is the way, it came into my mind--Do you not know that Christ has prepared a full salvation, and holds it in waiting for your acceptance? There it was. Will you have it?

Let this offer console sinners of every class who will come to this Savior. Do not wait. If you have sinned, flee to this Advocate. Say to Him,--I have sinned, but I condemn my sin, and I flee to thee--I cleave to thee alone. I have no other refuge. Undone in myself, I fly to Thee. Again, O sinner, let me urge you that, salvation being near, and freely offered, you now embrace for once and forever.

The Inner and The Outer Revelation

Lecture III

February 15, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

There are many who believe that a loose indefinite infidelity has rarely, if ever, been more prevalent in our country than at this time, especially among young men. I am not prepared to say it is an honest infidelity, yet it may very probably be real. Young men may really doubt the inspiration of the Christian Scriptures, not because they have honestly studied those scriptures and their numerous evidences, but because they have read them little and reasoned legitimately, yet less. Especially have they almost universally failed to study the intuitive affirmations of their own minds. They have not examined the original revelation that God has made in each human soul, to see how far this would carry them, and how wonderfully it opens the way for understanding and indeed for embracing the revelation given in God's Word.

To bring these and kindred points before your minds, I have taken as my text, the words of Paul--

Text.--2 Cor. 4:2: "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Paul is speaking of the gospel ministry which he received, and is stating how he fulfilled it. He shows

plainly that he sought to preach to the human conscience. He found in each man's bosom a conscience to which he could appeal, and to which the manifestation of the truth commended itself.

Probably no thoughtful man has ever read the Bible without noticing that there has been a previous revelation given in some way to man. It assumes many things as known already. I may have said in the hearing of some of you that I was studying in my law-office when I bought my first Bible, and that I bought it as one of my law-books. No sooner had I opened it than I was struck to see how many things it assumed as known, and therefore states with no attempt at proof. For instance, the first verse in the Bible--"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This assumes the existence of God. It does not aim to prove this truth; it goes on the presumption that this revelation--the existence of a God--has been made already to all who are mature enough to understand it. The Apostle Paul also in his epistle to the Romans, asserts that the real Godhead and eternal power of the one God, though in some sense "invisible things," are yet "clearly seen," in the creation of the world, "being understood by the things that are made," so that all wicked men are without excuse. His doctrine is that the created universe reveals God. And if this be true of the universe without us, it is no less true of the universe within us. Our own minds--their convictions, their necessary affirmations--do truly reveal God and many of the great truths that respect our relations to Him and to his government.

When we read the Bible attentively and notice how many things, of the utmost importance, it assumes and bases its precepts on them, without attempting to prove them, we cannot forbear to inquire--Are these assumptions properly made?

The answer to this question is found when we turn our eye within and inquire for the intuitive affirmations of our own minds. Then we shall see that we possess an intellectual and moral nature which as truly reveals great truths concerning God and our relations to him and to law, as the material world reveals his eternal power and Godhead.

For instance, we shall see that man has a moral nature related to spiritual and moral truth, as really as he has a physical nature related to the physical world. As his senses, sight, touch, hearing, intuit certain truths respecting the external world, so does his spiritual nature intuit certain truths respecting the spiritual world. No man can well consider the first class of truths without being forced to consider and believe the second.

Let us see if this be true.

It is not long since I had interviews with a young lady of considerable intelligence who was a skeptic. She professed to believe in a God and in those great truths pertaining to his attributes which are embraced in Deism; but she quite rejected the Bible and all that pertains to a revealed way of salvation.

I began with presenting to her mind some of the great truths taught by the mind's own affirmations concerning God, his attributes, and government, and then from this, I passed on to show her how the Bible came in to make out a system of truth needful to man as a lost sinner. She admitted the first of course; and then she saw that the second must be true if the first was, or there could be nothing for man but hopeless ruin. Starting back in horror from the gulf of despair, she saw that only her unbelief

was ruining her soul; and then renouncing this, she yielded her heart to God and found Gospel peace and joy in believing.

I propose now to present much the same course of thought to you as I did to her.

And here the first great inquiry is--What ideas does our own nature--God's first revelation--give us?

(1.) Undoubtedly, the idea of God. Our own minds affirm that there is and must be a God; that He must have all power and all knowledge. Our mind also gives us God's moral attributes. No man can doubt that God is good and just. Men are never afraid that God will do anything wrong. If at all afraid of God, it is because He is good--is just and holy.

(2.) Man's nature gives him the idea of law--moral law. He can no more doubt the existence of a moral law, imposed too on himself, than he can doubt the existence of his own soul and body. He knows he ought not to be selfish--ought to be benevolent. He knows he is bound to love his neighbor as himself--bound to seek the higher at the sacrifice, if need be, of the lower good.

How is it that men get these ideas? I answer, They must have them by nature; they must be in the mind before any direct instruction from human lips, else you could never teach a child these ideas, more than you could teach them to a horse. The child knows these things before he is taught, and cannot remember when he first had them.

Suppose you were to close your Bible, and ask, Now, apart from all this book teaches, how much do I know? How much must I admit? You would find that your moral nature gives you the idea of a God, and affirms his existence; it gives you his attributes, natural and moral, and also your own moral relations to him and to your fellow-beings. In proof of this I can appeal to you--not one of you can say, I am under no obligation to love God; I am not bound to love my fellow-men. Your moral nature gives you these things--it affirms to you these truths, even more directly and undeniably than your senses give you the facts of the external world. Moreover, your moral nature not only gives you the law of supreme love to God and of love equal and impartial toward your fellow-men, but it affirms that you are sinners--that you have displeased God--have utterly failed to please Him, and of course that you are under condemnation from his righteous law. You know that God's good law must condemn you, because you have not been good in the sense required by that law. Hence you must know that you are in the position of an outlaw, condemned by law, and without hope from the administration of justice.

Another thing it gives you, viz., that you are still in penitence (I speak of those who know this to be their case;) your own conscience affirms this to you past all contradiction. It affirms that you are still living in sin, and have not reformed in such a sense that God can accept your reformation. You know that you do violence to your own conscience, and that while you are doing this, you can neither respect yourself nor be respected by God. You know that so long as this is the case with you, God cannot forgive you. Nay more, if He should, it would do you no good; you could not be happy; you could not respect yourself even if you were told that you were forgiven. Indeed if your nature spake out unbiased, it would not let you believe yourself really forgiven, so long as you are doing violence to conscience. I can remember when these thoughts were in my mind like fire. I saw that no man

could doubt them, any more than he can doubt his own existence. So you may see these truths and feel their force.

You know then that by your sins, you have forfeited the favor of God, and have no claim on Him at all on the score of justice. You have cast off his authority, have disowned subjection to his law and government; indeed you have cast all his precepts beneath your feet. You can no longer come before God and say, "Thou oughtest not to cast me off; I have not deserved it at thy hand." You can no more say this honestly, than you can deny your own existence.

Did you ever think of this? Have you ever tried this, to see what you can honestly do and say, before God? Have you ever tried to go into God's presence and tell Him solemnly that He has no right to punish you? Not one of you can tell Him so without being conscious in yourself of blasphemy.

It is a good method because it may serve to show you how the case really stands. Suppose then you try it. See what you can honestly and with an approving conscience say before God, when your soul is deeply impressed with the sense of his presence. Consider, I am not asking you whether you can harden your heart and violate your conscience enough to blaspheme God to his face; not this, but I am asking you to put the honest convictions of your own conscience to the test and see what they are and what they will allow you to do and to say before God. Can you kneel down before Him and say--"I deny that I have cast off God--I have never refused to treat Him as a friend--I have never treated Him as an enemy?"

You know you can make no issue of this sort with God without meeting the rebukes of your own mind.

Again; you can see no reason to hope for forgiveness under the law. With all the light of your Deism you can discern no ground of pardon. Outside the Bible, all is dark as death. There is no hope. If you cherish any, it must be directly in the teeth of your own solemn convictions. Why do you think it is so difficult to induce a discreet governor to grant a pardon? When Jerome Bonaparte was monarch of Spain, why did Napoleon send him that earnest rebuke for pardoning certain criminals? What were the principles that underlaid that remarkably able state paper? Have you ever studied those principles, as they were grasped and presented so vigorously by the mighty mind of Napoleon?

You can never infer from the goodness of God that He can forgive; much less, that He must. One of the first Universalist preachers I ever heard announced in the outset that he should infer from the goodness of God that He would save all men. I can well remember how perfectly shallow his sophistry appeared to me and how absurd his assumptions. I was no Christian then, but I saw at a glance that he might far better infer from the goodness of God that He would forgive none than that He would forgive all. It seemed to me most clear that if God were good and had made a good law, He would sustain it. Why not? I must suppose that his law is a good one;--how could a Being of infinite wisdom and love impose any other than a good law? And if it were a good law, it had a good end to answer; and a good God could not suffer it to fail of answering those ends by letting it come to naught through inefficiency in its administration. I knew enough about law and government then to see that a firm hand in administration is essential to any good results from ever so good a law. Of course I knew that if law were left to be trampled under foot by hardened blasphemous transgressors, and then to cap

the climax, an indiscriminate pardon were given, and nothing done to sustain law, there would be an end of all authority and a positive annihilation of all the good hoped for under its administration. What? Shall rational men undertake to infer from God's goodness that he will pardon all sinners! Suppose the spirit of riot and misrule now so rampant at Erie, Pa., to go on from bad to worse; that the rioters perpetrate every form of mischief in their power; they tear up the rails, burn down the bridges, fire into the cars, run whole trains off the track and crush the quivering flesh of hundreds en masse into heaps of blood and bones;--and by and by when the guilty are arrested and convicted by due course of law, then the question comes up--Shall the governor pardon them? He might be very much inclined to do so, if he wisely could; but the question is--Can a good governor do it? Supposing him to be purely good and truly wise, what would he do? Will you say, O he is too good to punish--he is so good, he will certainly pardon? Will you say that pardon indiscriminately given, and given to all, and according to previous assurance moreover--will secure the highest respect for law and the best obedience? Every body knows that this is superlative nonsense. No man who ever had anything to do under the responsibilities of government, or who has ever learned the a b c of human nature in this relation, can for one moment suppose that pardon--in such ways--can supplant punishment with any other result than utter ruin. No; if the ruler is good, he will surely punish; and all the more surely, by how much the more predominant is the element of goodness in his character.

You, sinners, are under law. If you sin, you must see great reason why God should punish and not forgive.

Here is another fact. When you look upon yourself and your moral position, you find yourself twice dead. You are civilly dead in the sense of being condemned by law, an outcast from governmental favor. You are also morally dead, for you do not love God, do not serve Him, have no tendencies that draw you back into sympathy with God; but on the other hand you are dead to all considerations that look in this direction. You are indeed alive to your own low, selfish interests, but dead to God's interests; you care nothing for God only to avoid Him and escape his judgment. All this you know, beyond all question.

In this condition, without a further revelation, where is your hope? You have none, and have no ground for any.

Furthermore, if a future revelation is to be made, revealing some ground of pardon, you can see with the light now before you on what basis it must rest. You can see what more you need from God. The first revelation shuts you up to God--shows you that if help ever comes, it cannot come out of yourself, but must come from God--cannot come of his justice, but must come from his mercy--cannot come out of law, but must come from some extra provision whereby law may have its demands satisfied otherwise than through the execution of its penalty on the offender. Somebody, you can see, must interpose for you, who can take your part and stand in your stead before the offended law.

Did you never think of this? In the position where you stand, and where your own nature and your own convictions place you, you are compelled to say--My case is hopeless! I need a double salvation--from condemnation and from sinning; first from the curse, and secondly from the heart to sin--from the tendency and disposition to commit sin. Enquiring for a revelation to meet these wants

of my lost soul, where can I find it? Is it to be found in all the book of nature? Nowhere. Look into the irresistible convictions of your own moral being; they tell you of your wants, but they give you no supply. They show what you need, but they utterly fail to give it. Your own moral nature shows that you need an atoning Saviour and a renewing Spirit. Nothing less can meet the case of a sinner condemned, outlawed, and doubly dead by the moral corruption of all his voluntary powers.

The worst mischief of infidelity is that it ignores all this; it takes no notice of one entire side of our nature, and that the most important side; talking largely about philosophy, it yet restricts itself to the philosophy of the outer world and has no eye for the inner and higher nature. It ignores the fact that our moral nature affirms one entire class of great truths, with even more force and certainty than the senses affirm the facts of the external world. Verily, this is a grand and a fatal omission!

REMARKS.

1. Without the first revelation the second could not be satisfactorily proved. When the Bible reveals God, it assumes that our minds affirm his existence and that we need no higher proof. When it reveals his law, it pre-supposes that we are capable of understanding it, and of appreciating its moral claims. When it prescribes duty, it assumes that we ought to feel the force of obligation to obey it.

Now the fact that the Bible does make many assumptions of this sort establishes an intimate and dependent connection between it on the one hand, and the laws of the human mind on the other. If these assumptions are well and truly made, then the divine authority of the Bible is abundantly sustained by its correspondence and harmony with the intellectual and moral nature of man. It fits the beings to whom it is given. But on the other hand, if these assumptions had on examination proved false, it would be impossible to sustain the credit of the scriptures as coming from a wise and honest Being.

2. Having the first revelation, to reject the second is most absurd. The second is, to a great extent, a re-affirmation of the first, with various important additions of a supplementary sort, e.g. the atonement, and hence the possibility of pardon; the gift and work of the Spirit, and hence the analogous possibility of being saved from sinning.

Now those things which the first revelation affirms and the second re-affirms are so fundamental in any revelation of moral duty to moral beings, that, having them taught so intuitively, so undeniably, we are left self-convicted of extreme absurdity if we then reject the second. Logically there seems no ground left on which to base a denial of the written revelation. Its supplementary doctrines are not, to be sure, intuitive truths, but they are so related to man's wants as a lost sinner, and so richly supply those wants; they, moreover, are so beautifully related to the exigencies of God's government and so amply meet them, that no intelligent mind, once apprehending all these things in their actual relations, can fail to recognize their truthfulness.

3. The study of the first secures an intellectual reception of the second. I do not believe it possible for a man to read and understand the first thoroughly and then come to the second and fairly apprehend its relation to his own moral nature and moral convictions, and also his moral wants, without being compelled to say--all is true--this book is all true! They coincide so wondrously, and the former

sustains the latter so admirably and so triumphantly--a man can no more deny the Bible after knowing all his own moral relations than he can deny his own existence.

4. You see why so many reject the Bible. They have not well read themselves. They have not looked within, to read carefully the volume God has put on record there. They have contrived to hush and smother down the ever-rising convictions of their own moral nature. They have refused to listen to the cry of want which swells up from their troubled bosom of guilt.--Hence there is yet one whole volume of revelation of which they are strangely ignorant. This ignorance accounts for their rejection of the Bible.

A little attention to the subject will show you that the ground here indicated is beyond question that on which the masses in every Christian land really repose their faith in the Bible. Scarce one in ten thousand of them has studied the historical argument for divine revelation extensively and carefully, so as intelligently to make this a corner stone for his faith in the Bible. It is not reasonable to demand that they should. There is an argument shorter and infinitely more convincing. It is a simple problem; given, a soul guilty, condemned and undone; required, some adequate relief. The gospel solves the problem. Who will not accept the solution? It answers every condition perfectly; it must therefore come from God; it is at least our highest wisdom to accept it.

If it be replied to this, that such a problem meets the case of those only who give their hearts to God; it may be modified for yet another class, on this wise;--given, a moral nature which affirms God, law, obligation, guilt, ruin; required, to know whether a written revelation is reliable, which is built upon the broad basis of man's intuitive affirmations; which gives them the sanction of man's Creator; which appends a system of duty and of salvation, of such sort that it interlocks itself inseparably with truth intuitive to man, and manifestly fills out a complement of moral instructions and agencies in perfect adaptation to both man and his Maker. In the Bible, we have the very thing required. A key that threads the countless wards of such a lock must have been made to fit. Each came from the same Author. You can not grant to man an origin from God but you must grant the same origin to the Bible.

When I came to examine these things in the light of my own convictions, I wondered I had not seen them truly before.

Suppose I should stand here and announce to you the two great precepts of the moral law; would not their obvious nature and bearings enforce on your mind the conviction that these precepts must be true and must be from God? As I should descend to particulars, you would still affirm--these must be true; these must certainly have come down from heaven. If I were even to go back to the Mosaic law--(a law which many object against, because they do not understand the circumstances that called for such a law)--yet if I should explain their peculiar circumstances and the reasons for such statutes, every man must affirm the rectitude of even those statutes. The Old Testament, I am aware, reveals truth under a veil, the world not being prepared then for its clearer revelation. The veil was taken away when in the fullness of time, people were prepared for unclouded revealings of God in the flesh.

The reason therefore why the masses receive the Bible, is not that they are credulous, and hence swallow down absurdities with ease; but the reason is that it commends itself so irresistibly to each man's own nature and to his deep and resistless convictions, he is shut up to receive it; he must do

violence to his inner convictions, if he reject it. Man's whole nature cries out--This is just what I need! That young lady of whom I spake could not help but abandon her infidelity and yield up her heart to God, when she had reached this point. I said--Do you admit a God? She answered--Yes. Do you admit a law? Yes. Do you admit your personal guilt? Yes. And your need of salvation? O, yes. Can you help yourself? said I. Ah no, indeed, she said, I do not believe I can ever be saved. But God can save you. Surely nothing is too hard for Him.

Alas, she replied, my own nature has shut me up--I am in despair; there is no way of escape for me; the Bible, you know, I don't receive; and here I am in darkness and despair!

At this point, I began to speak of the gospel. Said I to her--See there; God has done such and such things as revealed in the gospel; he came down and dwelt in human flesh to meet the case of such sinners as you are; he made an ample atonement for sin; there, what do you think of that? "That is what I need exactly," said she, "if it were only true."

If it is not true, said I, you are lost beyond hope--Then why not believe?

I can not believe it, she said, because it is incredible. It is a great deal too good to be true!

And is not God good, said I--infinitely good? Then why do you object that anything He does is too good to be true?

"That is what I need," again she repeated, "but how can it be so!"

Then you cannot give God credit for being so good! said I.

Alas, I see, it is my unbelief--but I cannot believe. It is what I need, I can plainly see--but how can I believe it?

At this point I rose up and said to her solemnly--The crisis has come! There is now only one question for you--Will you believe the gospel? She raised her eyes, which had been depressed and covered for half an hour or more; every feature bespoke the most intense agitation;--while I repeated--Will you believe God? Will you give him credit for sincerity? She threw herself upon her knees, and burst into loud weeping. What a scene--to see a skeptic beginning to give her God credit for love and truth! To see the door of light and hope opened, and heaven's blessed light breaking in upon a desolate soul! Have you ever witnessed such a scene?

When she next opened her lips, it was to show forth a Saviour's praise!

The Bible assumes that you have light enough to see, and to do your duty and to find the way to heaven. A great many of you are perhaps bewildered as to your religious opinions, holding loose and skeptical notions. You have not seen that it is the most reasonable thing in the world to admit and embrace this glorious truth. Will you allow yourself to go on, bewildered, without considering that you are yourself a living, walking revelation of truth? Will you refuse to come into such relations to God and Christ as will save your soul?

In my early life, when I was tempted to skepticism, I can well recollect that I said to myself--It is much more probable that ministers and the multitudes of good men who believe the Bible are right, than that I am. They have examined the subject, but I have not. It is therefore entirely unreasonable for me to doubt.

Why should you not say--I know the gospel is suited to my wants. I know I am afloat on the vast ocean of life, and if there is no Gospel, there is nothing that can save me. It is therefore no way for me to stand here and cavil. I must examine--must look into this matter. I can at least see that if God offers me mercy, I must not reject it. Does not this gospel show you how you can be saved from hell and from sin? O then believe it! Let the blessed truth find a heart open for its admission. When you shall dare to give God credit for all his love and truth, and when you shall bring your heart under the power of this truth, and yield yourself up to its blessed sway,--that will be the dawn of morning to your soul! Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life, freely.

On Quenching The Spirit

Lecture IV

March 1, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--1 Thess. 5:19: "Quench not the Spirit."

In treating the subject presented in this passage, I shall,

- I. Show what it is to quench the Spirit;*
- II. How it is done;*
- III. Some of the consequences of doing it.*

I. Show what it is to quench the Spirit.

The Bible represents the Spirit as giving to the mind both light and heat. It both illumines and impresses; both reveals the truth, and makes it seem real, and hence makes it effective as truth, upon the mind. Hence the fitness of the figure which on the day of Pentecost, presented the descending Spirit under the symbol of "cloven tongues like as of fire." Hence also the figure implied in our text -- "Quench not" -- as if it were a candle flame, a fire, which might be extinguished. It is the office-work

of the Spirit to enlighten the intellect, and at the same time to warm the sensibilities. This is indeed a most remarkable fact, that when the Spirit of God reveals light, it is done in a manner which always warms the sensibility. The mind is quite as conscious of the latter influence upon the sensibilities as of the former upon the intellect. Beyond question, Christians are sometimes conscious of new views of truth, which they rightly attribute to the teaching of the Spirit; but not less clearly are they sometimes conscious of the animating and quickening influences of the Spirit, deeply rousing their sensibilities. Hence no figure can be more apposite than this. To quench this light and heat by counteracting and repelling the Spirit is the thing against which the text exhorts us.

II. But we must give a minute more attention to this question as to the manner in which the Spirit may be quenched.

I have said the Spirit causes the mind both to see and to feel. He convinces of sin. He strongly enforces obligation. The degree of impression made by the Spirit on the mind of course varies indefinitely, from the very slightest up to the broad and blazing sun-light which almost overwhelms the outward man.

The Spirit may be quenched in many ways.

- 1. By disregarding His teachings. When the Spirit reveals truth and urges duty upon the mind, then if the man turns away and refuses to obey, he quenches the Spirit. Often in pressing home truth upon the mind, the Spirit makes the sinner so uneasy, that he says, "I cannot endure this; I am not ready to yield now, and I cannot bear the perpetual urging. I must resist it." It often happens that students are so unhappy under the convicting influence of the Spirit that they declare they will not attend to the subject, but will harden their hearts against this disturbing and annoying influence. Perhaps to help on their purpose of diverting their attention, they will carry their study books into religious meetings, to occupy their minds in something else besides religious truth. Cases of this sort have occurred among us; students have found their studies hindered by intruding thoughts of God and their soul's salvation, and have determined they would not have it so, and consequently have ruled the whole subject out of their mind. Others besides students may do the same thing perhaps for similar reasons; the subject interferes with some cherished pursuit, and they would sooner risk the loss of heaven than bear the interruption of cherished sinful pleasures.
- 2. The Spirit is quenched often by the sinner's refusing obedience when the will of God is distinctly known. They see that if they would please God, they must do some particular duty, impressed on their mind so strongly they cannot doubt as to the Divine will; but they refuse to do it. Thus they quench the Spirit, for it seems a fixed rule in God's spiritual administration that He does not strive by His Spirit long, in the face of direct and determined disobedience.

I must also say here that men may quench the Spirit when the mind is by no means definitely and consciously committed to disobedience. Perhaps the man is only conscious that he cares very little about obedience. He would not wish to insult God, but he cares so little about pleasing Him that his mind settles down into a chronic stupidity. Under the influence of this, he sees God's demands only with great indistinctness and with the utmost unconcern. I need not say that such a state of mind repels the Holy Spirit, and

quenches its sacred fire.

The cases are fearfully numerous in which men see with great clearness what God requires, and see that God has brought before them the distinct issue of eternal destiny, as hanging upon their present decision. Yet they reject God's counsel and rush on their own damnation. I have often seen cases of this kind in which persons have told me that they saw the dreadful issue, yet made the fearful plunge.

- 3. The Spirit is quenched by procrastination.

It is not their design to put the matter off forever, nor perhaps very long; but they have some selfish reason, for doing so, just at this time. Alas who knoweth what shall be on the morrow? This is one of the fatal ways to quench the Spirit.

- 4. By yielding to some temptation, the Spirit is often quenched. The temptation will often come in just that form which is, of all, most adapted to quench the Spirit. It may be the very object of the tempter to seduce you to do just the thing that will most surely and fatally repel the Divine Spirit forever from your heart. True to his genius and character, he will present it in a very seductive form. It will make its warm appeal to some long cherished indulgence. Then if you parley with the temptation instead of instantly repelling it, you are gone. If you allow yourself to linger in presence of the tempting good, and let your sensibilities to that good become excited, and do not try to hold strongly before your mind the great things of God, you have nothing to expect but a fearful fall before its power.

A distinction should be made, as to the matter of guilt, between being hurried suddenly into temptation before you can think and so yielding, and on the other hand, looking long and thoughtfully at the subject and then giving way deliberately to its influence. In the latter case the results must be terribly fearful.

Often men give way to some worldly motive, and thereby so fundamentally decide the question as between their own souls and God, that the Spirit is quenched, and withdraws in despair of success. I could name cases where men have yielded to political motives, and other cases where they have yielded to business motives. They were sufficiently enlightened in their duty; they saw the will of God revealed plainly enough, but the temptation came, and they yielded. Some very striking cases have come under my personal observation, and I have lived to mark the results. I have lived to see that these men, giving way to the temptation of some strong political or business motive, have turned away from God fatally and forever, and God has withdrawn from them -- to return no more. "Woe unto them -- saith the Most High, when I depart from them."

In some cases sinners give way to the fear of man. It may happen that some other sinner has great influence over him; the latter dare not displease his companion; indeed would sooner displease God than this poor sinner under whose influence he has suffered himself to fall. Some issue will be made by the Spirit of God; the Spirit will present and press the claims of the gospel, and then there is no alternative but to sacrifice the favor of this wicked friend or the favor of God. Such issues are often made as between the claims of

God and the influence of some individual. The simple question is -- Whom will you serve? Will you serve God, or God's enemy?

You may remark in such cases the truth which has ten thousand illustrations in the moral world -- that the Spirit of God never shuns, but rather seeks fundamental issues -- issues of such a sort as decide the main question pending between God and the sinner. It is His business to bring this great question to a decision as between God and the sinner. Hence, He does not shrink from pressing His claims because the question may bring on a fundamental issue. You have often found it so. The question comes up in your mind -- Shall the fear of God or the fear of man, control me? An issue, made in this form is in its own nature fundamental and decisive. Whoever dishonors God by preferring man's honor before His, cuts his acquaintance, to use a familiar phrase; he cuts the friendship of the Almighty and casts Him off. Insulting as he does the majesty of God, how can it be otherwise? Shall the great God submit to have others, such as sinning and mean men, preferred before Himself, and this too in the vital respect of honor and obedience? If He were to submit to such an insult, what would become of His kingdom?

- 5. Men quench the Spirit by self-indulgence. Men are often brought to see that their self-indulgent habits are displeasing to God. When this is the case, they come into a fearful trial. Shall they yield to the demands of self-indulgence, or resisting these demands, shall they yield to God? This becomes oftentimes the great crisis of their lives.

Some of you recollect the case of a young man once a student here, who under the influences of the Spirit, became greatly agonized on the question of using tobacco. At one time he tried to laugh it off; at another tried to justify himself by pleading the example of many good man; but when all these pleas availed not, he yielded at last, and said he would do God's will, cost what it might. He afterwards said to me, most emphatically, "I have no doubt I should have gone to hell, if I had held on and resisted God through that struggle. It was the crisis of my destiny."

I have in mind another case of a man who visited me. He said as he entered, "I have a particular errand in making this call upon you, and yet I have scarcely strength to tell you my case. The dreadful conflict in my soul has almost crushed me." He spent some days with me. When he came to be able to relate his story, he said in substance, "I have been in the habit of using tobacco a long time. At length I saw an article in some paper, which set forth the evils and the sin of the practice. I was convicted, I saw those evils developing themselves in my own system. I felt convicted of the sin of this mischievous and sensual indulgence, and resolved to discontinue it. But ere long temptation came; I yielded, and returned to my guilty self-indulgence. What was the result? I fell to the very depths of moral impotence; I seemed to have lost all power to resist not only this temptation, but every other form of temptation. In fact the Spirit of God seems to have utterly departed from me."

Some of you may be disposed to sneer at this as a trifling thing; but mark! it can be no trifle to decide a great fundamental question as between yourself and God!

Suppose a child takes issue with his father. It may be about the merest trifle; but no matter how small the thing in controversy may be; the question of obedience or disobedience is always great. When a child rebels against parental authority and takes issue on the question of authority, the results are momentous. Do you estimate the sin to be small because the indulgence promised in the temptation is insignificant and trifling? Will you yield to a temptation to displease God, and think it no harm because the temptation is so very small? Will you infer that God does not care how much you insult and disobey Him, provided your temptation to do so is quite trifling! To think so is to mistake absurdity for argument. The smaller the temptation and the indulgence, the greater the guilt and the insult towards God when you prefer contemptibly small things to His favor, and to Himself.

- 6. Persons quench the Spirit by indulging in hard thoughts and revengeful feelings. Let any man go down upon his knees in prayer to God, and while in this attitude and in these attempts, let him indulge in revengeful purposes. Can he pray any more? Certainly not, until he breaks down and repents. If one allows himself to brood over his fancied wrongs and cherish a revengeful feeling and purpose, it is vain for him to suppose that the Spirit of God can dwell in his bosom. The antipathy may fasten on some individual, or on bodies of men, or on some of the great reforms of the age; it is all the same as to the result -- it must quench the Spirit of God. How strongly do some men speak and act in some things, showing that they are under the dominion of their prejudices. With such, the Spirit of God cannot dwell.
- 7. So also the indulgence of envious feeling quenches the Spirit. You see this sometimes among students. A few years since, there was a young man here who had a rare talent for public speaking, and some other respectable talents besides. There were at that time several students here who allowed themselves to indulge in feelings of envy towards him. I had occasion to know that not one of them enjoyed the presence of God so long as they indulged this envious spirit.
- 8. A selfish ambition must have the same result. When a student is determined to rise in the world for purely selfish ends, he will surely quench the light of God in his soul.
- 9. When persons allow themselves in a censorious and contemptuous spirit, and give scope to their tongues to speak censoriously, they quench the light of God from their own souls. They can not have the Spirit of the Lord dwelling within.
- 10. When persons having done wrong refuse to make confession, and when satisfied of their own wrong, are yet too proud to confess, it cannot be otherwise than that they quench the Spirit. They may think God will overlook such sin as theirs, but they know not God if they think so.

Some do not directly refuse to make restitution, but put it off a long time. I know one man who has wronged his neighbor, and has refused to make restitution so far as I know up to this hour. I am certain he has not had any of the Spirit's presence since he perpetrated that foul wrong. Even if he should say he enjoyed the Spirit and should make his oath of it, I would not believe him. He might deceive himself, but he cannot deceive God; nor can he induce God to look with any favor upon his iniquity.

Again, men often quench the Spirit thus. A great public object comes before them, demanding pecuniary aid -- as for example, raising the salary of a minister and some people dodge away and grieve the Spirit of God.

- 11. In their public relations, men often quench the Spirit by political dishonesty. It is striking to observe how much room there is for this since the great social and moral reforms have come up to throw their influence and their demands into political life. Truly may it be said, these reforms are "set for the fall and rise of many in Israel." How searchingly do they put to the test the consciences of political men! And how fearfully do they harden many consciences -- presenting moral claims which selfish men find it convenient to resist! You, young men, might go and preach to such seared consciences till you die, and never bring the first man of them to repentance. If from similar motives they do what they know is wrong; if for party purposes they give way to political dishonesty -- where are they?

Persons may commit themselves to the wrong side and thus throw themselves under an influence which is utterly adverse to their being led by the Spirit of God. Men associate themselves together into parties, and by and by, their party takes a morally wrong position; then the whole strength of the party bond goes to bind them to wrong-doing and to harden their conscience against all appeals to do right. Suppose a minister should preach on political duties before such a body of men, and any one of them should see his own dreadful error and should begin to think seriously of turning from his evil way. Some one accosts him, saying -- Will you be influenced in politics by the preacher? At once his pride is up; the party ties draw; he returns again to his iniquities.

- 12. Some men are influenced by what they call prudence, which is real unbelief. The amount of it is they judge merely after men and according to human views, and as if there were no God, or at least no reliance to be placed on what He has said. Must not such a course quench the Spirit?
- 13. Sometimes men trample down their religious feelings and put an extinguisher upon their emotions, and thus put out the light of God in their souls. If it be true, as I have said, that the Spirit gives heat as well as light; quickens the emotions as well as enlightens the understanding, then most clearly those who resolutely repress all religious emotions must quench the Spirit.
- 14. Yet again, men will quench the Spirit when they resist conviction of any question of duty. No matter how these impressions of duty may be made, whether immediately by the Spirit, or mediately by external providences, yet if they are resisted, the Spirit is driven away.
- 15. And finally some quench the Spirit by resenting reproof when they really need and deserve it.

In such ways as these men quench God's Spirit.

III. We must now consider some of the consequences.

- 1. Judicial blindness of the intellect is a natural result. The intellect becomes more dark and

blind than ever before, even doubting and perhaps denying things which were clear before. It is most remarkable that truths, never before doubted are doubted now. Such persons lose confidence in the Bible and even in the very existence of God; declare that they have no confidence in anybody's piety, and even deny that there is anything as sincere benevolence. Such a state proves itself to be a judgment from God -- for no mind in its normal, rational state can take such views as these. It is a dark atheistic state. God has given such men up to strong delusion that they may believe a lie. The reason why He has done so is that they would not receive the truth in love that they might be saved. They resisted and quenched the Spirit. They set at naught all the agencies God could wisely employ to save them -- distorted all the truth He revealed to bless them; and now it only remains that their example of dark delusion and full damnation should be a lesson of warning to save other souls from that way of death.

It is only right and just that God should send strong delusion on such as will not obey the truth, and such as will neither honor nor cherish the work of His Spirit in their hearts. He has an unquestionable right to deliver them up as He did Ahab. Ahab, you recollect, would have his own way, although God told him he must not go and would lose his life if he did. Still he wanted to go -- would go -- went and was killed. You may recollect the circumstances. Ahab had years before been at war with Syria; there had now been a three years' suspension of hostilities. A certain city, called Ramoth Gilead, belonging of right to Ahab, had been during this armistice, in possession of Syria. Jehoshaphat of Judah makes Ahab a friendly visit. While there, it occurs to Ahab to propose to him to go up with him to help him recapture Ramoth Gilead, and he replies favorably. But in those days no king went to war without consulting his gods. Hence Jehoshaphat inquires if there are not some prophets of the Lord by whom they may consult the true God. Ahab replies -- I have a host of prophets of Baal and of the groves; let them all be convened and questioned on this great matter. But, says Jehoshaphat, have you not some prophet of the Lord whom we may consult? "There is one," says Ahab, "but I hate him, for he never prophesies good for me, but only evil." Nay, says Jehoshaphat, but let him come also, and let us hear what he shall say from the Lord.

With one voice Baal's prophets said, "Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Jehoshaphat, still unsatisfied, calls for the answer from the one adhering prophet of Jehovah. Micaiah knew how the case stood. Aware that Ahab had sold himself to do wickedly and that God was giving him up to his chosen delusions, he answered at first ironically -- "Go and prosper" -- as the false prophets had said. It is plain there was something in his tone and manner that showed Ahab that his words meant what they did not say, and therefore he replies -- "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?" Then Micaiah, under the awful solemnity of his position, revealed to Ahab his true character and his impending doom. "Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord; I saw the Lord sitting on His throne and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left." I need not repeat what is written of the imagery of this scene; suffice it to say God suffered a lying spirit to go forth to lead Ahab on in his own cherished and chosen course. Yet even so, Ahab rejects this solemn warning from the Lord; though warned, he still persisted in his plan and met his death as God had said. So men are sometimes given up to judicial hardness and speedy ruin. They lose all sense of guilt; they seem desperately infatuated; afloat on a sea

of doubt and darkness, they speedily near the awful brink of death; you look for them, and they are gone!

In our days, the methods of delusion are slightly modified as compared with those which obtained in the days of Ahab. Yet you may distinctly trace the same law of the Divine administration -- the same dark ocean of doubts and absurdities. Now, mesmerism, biology, the most foolish things that can be gotten up, will seem to them more like truth than the teachings of God's Spirit. They will even believe the revelations of Andrew Jackson Davis more than those of Isaiah, and will give up all belief in the Bible if some rapping spirit tells them to do so. From all I can learn, I regard these delusions as the legitimate result of the manner in which the Holy Ghost was treated in those revivals which have overspread the land since my remembrance. The dread results are before us -- delusions deep, dark and damning, hastening on the righteous doom of those who knew their duty but who did it not; who were visited with the light of God's Spirit, but having quenched that light, are left to judicial blindness and strong delusion.

- 2. Again, let me say, if persons quench the Holy Ghost they will wax worse and worse. By no methods of their own will they deliver their own souls. Abandoned of God, their own intelligence strangely perverted by deep depravity of heart, there is no redeeming power to save them. The most palpable lies they seem to have lost all power to discriminate from the truth, or to deliver their souls from the power thereof. If they attempt to pray, they cannot realize that they are praying to God at all. Nothing to support, nothing to guide them; no Holy Ghost to enlighten them, no power from above to warm their souls into life; oh, how languid are their efforts at self-recovery; how feeble and how futile! If at any time one of this class becomes a little alarmed, and feeling some sensibility on religious subjects, falls on his knees to pray, almost before he begins, his mind wanders, he thinks of something else, and this is the end of his prayer.

Are any of you in this state? If any one should listen at your closet door, would he hear a feeble whisper and be impressed that your spiritual efforts are only of the very feeblest sort? What are your prayers? Is all earnestness dropped out? Is everything dark and dead round about your soul and within it, when you essay to draw near to God? Do you go and lie on your knees, almost ashamed of yourself that you think of praying at all? What is your state? Are you honestly afraid that the light of heaven has gone out? One of the most talented young men I ever knew came under the powerful influences of the Spirit, but resisted them finally and fatally. He had so much worldly political ambition, he could not possibly have God. His death-bed scene hastened on apace after he had fatally repelled the Spirit of God. Why should God spare him to live longer? The death scene came on. Darkness gathered thick upon his soul, so thick that it seemed to him the very room was all dark as the pit of despair. Lifting up his voice to its highest note, he cried, "Bring in a light, bring in a light!" Alas, how could he see light, after he had quenched all the light of God! How affecting the contrast between his case and that of the dying saint who melts away into the light of heaven!

Will you suffer yourself to pass on, rejecting God? Then no mercy or hope can ever beam upon you.

But if there be still a ray of light and some earnest thought of God; if your soul yet longs and trembles, O, seize the precious moment while yet it lingers; say -- "I will never quench the Spirit of God again! May the Lord enlighten me into all His blessed will!" This is the only safe course; the only course that can result in salvation. What do you say? Will you come and gather round the altar of God, to pour out your heart in mighty prayer? "Behold now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

What Men Highly Esteem, God Abhors

Lecture V

March 29, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Luke 16:15: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."

Christ had just spoken the parable of the unjust steward, in which He presented the case of one who unjustly used the property of others entrusted to him, for the purpose of laying them under obligation to provide for himself after expulsion from his trust. Our Lord represents this conduct of the steward as being wise in the sense of forethoughtful and provident for self--a wisdom of the world, void of all morality. He uses the case to illustrate and recommend the using of wealth in such a way as to make friends for ourselves who at our death shall welcome us into everlasting habitations." Then going deeper, even to the bottom principle that should control us in all our use of wealth, He lays it down that no man can serve both God and Mammon. Rich and covetous men who were serving Mammon need not suppose they could serve God too at the same time. The service of the one is not to be reconciled with the service of the other.

The covetous Pharisees heard all these things, and they derided Him. As if they would say--"Indeed, you seem to be very sanctimonious, to tell us that we do not serve God acceptably! When has there ever been a tithe of mint that we did not pay?" Those Pharisees did not admit His orthodoxy, by any means. They thought they could serve God and mammon both. Let whoever would say they serve mammon, they knew they served God also and they had nothing but scorn for those teachings that showed the inconsistency and the absurdity of their worshipping two opposing gods and serving two opposing masters.

Our Lord replied to them in the words of our text--"Ye are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the

sight of God."

In pursuing the subject thus presented, I shall--

Show how and why it is that men highly esteem that which God avoids.

1. They have a different rule of judgment. God judges by one rule; they by another. God's rule requires universal benevolence; their rule is satisfied with an amount of selfishness, so be it sufficiently refined to meet the times. God requires men to devote themselves not to their own interest, but to His interest and those of His great family. He sets up one great end--the highest glory of His name and kingdom. He asks them to become divinely patriotic, devoting themselves to their Creator and to the good of His creatures.

The world adopts an entirely different rule, allowing men to set up their own happiness as their end. It is curious that some pretended philosophers have laid down the same rule--viz.: that men should pursue their own happiness, and only take care not to infringe on others happiness too much. Their doctrine allows men to pursue a selfish course only not to infringe too palpably on others rights and interests.

But God's rule is, "Seek not thine own." His law is explicit--"Thou shalt love (not thy self, but) the Lord thy God with all thy heart." "Love is fulfilling of the law." "Charity (this same love) seeketh not her own." This is characteristic of the love the law requires--it does not seek its own. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's." (1Cor.10:24.) "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others." "For all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ." Phil. 2:4,21. To seek their own interest and not Jesus Christ, Paul regards an entire departure from true Christianity.

God regards nothing as virtue except devotion to the right ends. The right end is not one's own, but the general good. Hence God's rule requires virtue, while man's rule at best only restrains vice. All human governments are founded on this principle, as all who study the subject know. They do not require benevolence, they only restrain selfishness. In the foundation principles of our government, it is affirmed that men have certain inalienable rights, one of which is the right to pursue each his own happiness. This is affirmed to be an inalienable right, and is always assumed to be right in itself, provided it does not infringe on others' rights of happiness. But God's rule requires positive benevolence and regards nothing else as virtue except devotion to the highest good. Man's rule condemns nothing, provided man so restrains himself as not to infringe on others' rights.

Moral character is as the end sought. It cannot be predicated of muscular action, but must always turn on the end which the mind has in view. Men always really assume and know this. They know that the moral character is really as the end to which man devotes himself. Hence God's law and man's law being as they are, to obey God's is holiness; to obey only man's law is sin.

Men very inconsiderately judge themselves and others, not by God's rule, but by man's. They do this to an extent truly wonderful. Look into men's real opinions and you will see this. Often without being at all aware of it, men judge themselves, not by God's rule, but by their own.

Here I must notice some of the evidences of this, and furnish some illustrations.

(1.) Thus, for example, a mere negative morality is highly esteemed by some men. If a man lives in a community and does no harm, defrauds no man, does not cheat, or lie--does no palpable injury to society; transacts his business in a way deemed highly honorable and virtuous--this man stands in high repute according to the standard of the world. But what does all this really amount to? The man is just taking care of himself; that is all. His morality is wholly of this negative form. All you can say of him is, he does no hurt. Yet this morality is often spoken of in a manner which shows that the world highly esteem it. But does God highly esteem it? Nay, but it is abomination in His sight.

Again, a religion which is merely negative is often highly esteemed. Men of this religion are careful not to do wrong; but what is doing wrong? It is thought no wrong to neglect the souls of their neighbors. What do they deem wrong? Cheating, lying, stealing. These and such like things, they will admit are wrong. But what are they doing? Look round about you even here and see what men of this class are doing. Many of them never try to save a soul. They are highly esteemed for their inoffensive life; they do no wrong; but they do nothing to save a soul. Their religion is a mere negation. Perhaps they would not cross a ferry on the Sabbath; but never would they save a soul from death. They would let their own clerks go to hell without one earnest effort to save them. Must not such a religion be an abomination to God?

(2.) So, also, of a religion which at best consists of forms and prayers and does not add to these the energies of benevolent effort. Such a religion is all hollow. Is it serving God to do nothing but ask favors for one's self?

Some keep up Sabbath duties, as they are termed, and family prayer, but all their religion consists in keeping up their forms of worship. If they add nothing to these, their religion is only an abomination before God.

(3.) There are still other facts which show that men loosely set up a false standard, which they highly esteem, but which God abhors. For example, they will require true religion only of ministers; but no real religion of any body else. All men agree in requiring that ministers should be really pious. They judge them by the right rule. For example, they require ministers to be benevolent. They must enter upon their profession for the high object of doing good, and not for the mere sake of a living--not for filthy lucre's sake, but for the sake of souls and from disinterested love. Else they will have no confidence in a minister.

(4.) But turn this over and apply it to business men. Do they judge themselves by this rule? Do they judge each other by this rule? Before they will have Christian confidence in a merchant or a mechanic, do they insist that these shall be as much above the greed for gain as a minister should be--should be as willing to give up their time to the sick as a minister--be as ready to forego a better salary for the sake of doing more good, as they insist a minister should be? Who does not know that they demand of business men no such conditions of Christian character as those which they impose of gospel ministers? Let us see. If a man of business does any service for you, he makes out his bill, and if need be he collects it. Now suppose I should go and visit a sick man to give him spiritual counsel--should

attend him from time to time for counsel and for prayer, till he died, and then should attend his funeral; and having done this service should make up my bill and send it in, and even collect it;--would there not be some talk? People would say, What right has he to do that? He ought to perform that service for the love of souls, and make no charge for it. This applies to those ministers who are not under salary to perform this service, of whom there are many. Let any one of these men go and labor ever so much among the sick or at funerals, they must not take pay. But let one of these ministers send his saw to be filed, and he must pay for it. He may send it to that very man whose sick family he has visited by day and by night, and whose dead he has buried, without charge, and "for the love of souls;" but no such "love of souls" binds the mechanic in his service. The truth is, they call that, religion, in a layman which they call sin in a minister. That is the fact. I do not complain that men take pay for labor, but that they do not apply the same principle to a minister.

Again, the business aims and practices of business men are almost universally an abomination in the sight of God. Almost all of these are based on the same principle as human governments are, namely, that the only restraint imposed shall be, to prevent men from being too selfish, allowing them to be just as selfish as they can be and yet leave others an equal chance to be selfish too.

Shall we go into an enumeration of the principles of business men respecting their objects, and modes of doing business? What would it all amount to? Seeking their own ends; doing something, not for others, but for self. Provided they do it in a way regarded as honest and honorable among men, no further restriction shall be imposed.

(5.) Take the Bible Society for an illustration. This Institution is not a speculation, entered upon for the good of those who print and publish. But the object aimed at is to furnish them as cheap to the purchaser as possible, so as to put a Bible into the hands of every human being at the lowest possible price. Now it is easy to see that any other course and any different principle from this would be universally condemned. If Bible societies should become merely a speculation they would cease to be benevolent institutions at all, and to claim this character would bring down on them the curses of men. But all business ought to be done as benevolently as the making of Bibles; why not. If it be not, can it be a benevolent business? and if not benevolent, how can it have the approval of God? What is a benevolent business? The doing of the utmost good--that which is undertaken for the one only end of doing good, and which simply aims to do the utmost good possible. In just this sense, men should be patriotic, benevolent, should have a single eye to God's glory in all they do, whether they eat or drink or whatever they may do.

Yet where do you find the man who holds his fellowmen practically to this rule as a condition of their being esteemed Christians, viz.: That in all their business, they should be as benevolent as Bible societies are? What should we say of a Bible society which should enter upon a manifest speculation and should get as much as they can for their Bibles, instead of selling at the lowest living price? what would you say of such a Bible society? You would say, "Horrible hypocrite!" I must say the same of every Christian who does the same thing. Ungodly men do not profess any Christian benevolence, so we will not charge this hypocrisy on them, but we will try to get this light before their mind.

Now place a minister directly before your own mind, and ask, Do you judge yourself as you judge him? Do you say of yourself, I ought to do for others gratuitously all and whatever I require him to do

gratuitously? Do you judge yourself by the same rule by which you judge him?

Apply this to all business men. No matter what your business is whether high or low, small or great; filing saws, or counting out bank bills; you call the Bible society benevolent; do you make your business as much so and as truly so in your ends and aims? If not, why not? What business have you to be less benevolent than those who print, publish and sell Bibles?

(6.) Here is another thing which is highly esteemed among men, yet is an abomination before God; viz.: selfish ambition. How often do you see this highly esteemed! I have been amazed to see how men form judgments on this matter. Here is a young man who is a good student in the sense of making great progress in his studies, (a thing the devil might do,) yet for this only, such young men are often spoken of in the highest terms. Provided they do well for themselves, nothing more seems to be asked or expected in order to entitle them to high commendation.

So of professional men. I have in my mind's eye the case of a lawyer who was greatly esteemed and caressed by his fellow men; who was often spoken of well by Christians; but what was he? Nothing but an ambitious young lawyer, doing every thing for ambition--ready at any time to take the stump and canvass the whole country--for what? To get some good for himself. Yet he is courted by Christian families! Why? Because he is doing well for himself! See Daniel Webster. How lauded, I had almost said canonized! Perhaps he will be yet. Certainly the same spirit we now see would canonize him if this were a Catholic country. But what has he done? He has just played the part of an ambitious lawyer and an ambitious statesman; that is all. He has sought great things for himself; and having said that, you have said all. Yet how have men lauded Daniel Webster! When I came to Syracuse, I saw a vast procession. What, said I, is there a funeral here? Who is dead? Daniel Webster. But, said I, he has been dead a long time. Ye, but they are playing up funeral because he was a great man. What was Daniel Webster? Not a Christian, not a benevolent man; every body knows this. And what have Christians to do in lauding and canonizing a merely selfish ambition? they may esteem it highly, yet let them know, God abhors it as utterly as they admire it.

(7.) The world's entire morality and that of a large portion of the church are only a spurious benevolence. You see a family very much united and you say, How they love one another! So they do; but they may be very exclusive. They may exclude themselves and shut off their sympathies almost entirely from all other families, and they may consequently exclude themselves from doing good in the world. The same kind of a morality may be seen in towns and in nations. This makes up the entire morality of the world.

Many have what they call humanity, without any piety; and this is often highly esteemed among men. They pretend to love men, but yet after all do not honor God, nor even aim at it. And in their love of men, they fall below some animals. I doubt whether many men, not pious, would do what I knew a dog to do. His master wanted to kill him, and for this purpose took him out into the river in a boat and tied a stone about his neck. In the struggle to throw dog and stone overboard together, the boat upset; the man was in the river; the dog, by extra effort, released himself from his weight, and seizing his master by the collar, swam with him to land. Few men would have had humanity enough--without piety--to have done this. Indeed men without piety are not often half so kind to each other as animals are. Men are more degraded and more depraved. Animals will make greater sacrifices for each other

than the human race do. Go and ask a whaleman what he sees among the whales when they suffer themselves to be murdered to protect a school of their young. Yet many mothers think they do most meritorious things because they take care of their children.

But men, as compared with animals, ought to act from higher motives than they. If they do not, they act wickedly. Knowing more--having the knowledge of God and of dying Savior as their example and rule, they have higher responsibilities than animals can have.

(8.) Men often make a great virtue of their abolitionism though it be only of the infidel stamp. But perhaps there is no virtue in this, a whit higher than a mere animal might have. Whoever understands the subject of slavery and is a good man at heart will certainly be an abolitionist. But a man may be, an abolitionist without the least virtue. There may not be the least regard for God in his abolitionism, nor even any honest regard to human well-being. He may stand on a principles and adopt practices which show that if they had the power, they would enslave the race. They will not believe that a man can be a colonizationist, but I know good men who are--some men not only lord it over the bodies of their fellow men, but over their minds and souls--their opinions and consciences--which is much worse oppression and tyranny than simply to enslave the body.

(9.) Often there is a bitter and an acrimonious spirit--not by any means the spirit of Christ; for while Christ no doubt condemns the slaveholder, he does not hate him. This biting hatred of evil-doers is only malevolence after all; and though men may ever so highly esteem it, God abominates it. On the other hand, many call that piety, which has no humanity in it. Whip up their slaves to get money to give to the Bible Society! Touch up the gang; put on the cat o'nine tails; the agent is coming along for money for the Bible Society! Here is piety (so called) without humanity. I abhor a piety which has no humanity with it and in it, as deeply as I condemn its converse--humanity without piety. How greatly then must He abhor either when unnaturally divorced from the other!

All those so called religious efforts which men make, having only self for their end, are an abomination to God.

There is a wealthy man who consents to give two hundred dollars towards building a splendid church. He thinks this is a very benevolent offering, and it may be highly esteemed among men. But before God approves of it He will look into the motives of the giver; and so may we, if we please. The man we find owns a good deal of real estate in the village which he expects will rise in value on the very day that shall see the church building determined on, enough to put back into his pocket two or three fold what he pays out. Besides this he has other motives. He thinks of the increased respectability of having a fine house and himself the best seat in it. And yet further, he has some interest in having good morals sustained in the village, for vice is troublesome to rich men and withal somewhat dangerous. And then he has an indefinable sort of expectation that this new church and his handsome donation to build it will somehow improve his prospects for heaven. In as much as these are rather dim at best the improvement, though indefinite, is decidedly an object. Now if you scan these motives, you will see that from first to last they are altogether selfish. Of course they are an abomination in God's sight.

The motives for getting a popular minister are often of the same sort. The object is not to get a man

sent of God, to labor for God and with God, and one with whom the people may labor and pray for souls and for God's kingdom. But the object being something else than this is an abomination before God.

The highest forms of the world's morality are only abominations in God's sight. The world has what it calls good husbands, good wives, good children; but what sort of goodness is this? The husband loves his wife and seeks to please her. She also loves and seeks to please him. But do either of them love or seek to please God in these relations? By no means. Nothing can be farther from their thoughts. They never go beyond the narrow circle of self. Take all these human relations in their best earthly form, and you will find they never rise above the morality of the lower animals. They fondle and caress each other, and seem to take some interest in the care of their children.. So do your domestic fowls, not less, and perhaps even more. Often these fowls in your poultry yard go beyond the world's morality in these qualities which the world calls good.

Should not human beings have vastly higher ends than these? Can God deem their highly esteemed qualities any other than an abomination if in fact they are even below the level of the domestic animals?

An unsanctified education comes into the same category. A good education is indeed a great good; but if not sanctified, it is all the more odious to God. Yes, let me tell you, if not improved for God, it is only the more odious to him in proportion as you get light on the subject of duty, and sin against that light the more. Those very acquisitions which will give you higher esteem among men will if unsanctified make your character more utterly odious before God. You are a polished writer and a beautiful speaker. You stand at the head of the College in these important respects. Your friends look forward with hopeful interest to the time when you will be heard of on the floor of Senates, moving them to admiration by your eloquence, But alas, you have no piety! When we ask, how does God look upon such talents, unsanctified, we are compelled to answer--only as an abomination. This eloquent young student is only the more odious to God by reason of all his unsanctified powers. The very things which give you the more honor among men will make you only the scoff of hell. The spirits of the nether pit will meet you as they did the fallen monarch of Babylon, tauntingly saying--"what are you here? You who could shake kingdoms by your eloquence, are you brought down to the sides of the pit? You who might have been an angel of light--you who lived in Oberlin; you, a selfish doomed sinner--away and be out of our company! We have nobody here so guilty and so deeply damned as you!"

So of all unsanctified talents, beauty, education, accomplishments; all, if unsanctified, are an abomination in the sight of God. All of those things which might make you more useful in the sight of God, are if misused, only the greater abomination in His sight.

So a legal religion, with which you serve God only because you must. You go to church, yet not in love to God or to His worship, but from regard to your reputation, to your hope, or your conscience. Must not such a religion be of all things, most abominable to God?

REMARKS.

1. The world have mainly lost the true idea of religion. This is too obvious from all I have said to need more illustration.

2. The same is true to a great extent of the church--professed Christians judge themselves falsely because they judge by a false standard.

3. One of the most common and fatal mistakes is to employ a merely negative standard. Here are men complaining of a want of conviction. Why don't they take the right standard and judge themselves by that? Suppose you had let a house burn down and made no effort to save it; what would you think of the guilt of stupidity and laziness there? Two women and five children are burnt to ashes in the conflagrations; why did not you give the alarm when you saw the fire getting hold? Why did not you rush into the building and drag out the unconscious inmates? Oh you felt stupid that morning--just as people talk of being "stupid" in religion! Well, you hope not to be judged very hard, since you did not set the house on fire; you only let it alone; all you did was to do nothing! That is all many persons plead as to their religious duties. They do nothing to pluck sinners out of the fire, and they seem to think this is a very estimable religion! Was this the religion of Jesus Christ or of Paul? Is it the religion of real benevolence? or of common sense?

You see how many persons who have a Christian hope indulge it on merely negative grounds. Often I ask persons how they are getting along in religion. They answer, pretty well; and yet they are doing nothing that is really religious. They are making no effort to save souls--are doing nothing to serve God. What are they doing! O they keep up the forms of prayer! Suppose you should employ a servant and pay him off each week, yet he does nothing all the long day but pray to you!

4. Religion is very intelligible and is easily understood. It is a warfare. What is a warrior's service? He devotes himself to the service of his country. If need be he lays down his life on her altar. He is expected to do this.

So a man is to lay down his life on God's altar, to be used in life or death, as God may please, in His service.

5. The things most highly esteemed among men are often the very things God most abhors. Take for example, the legalist's religion. The more he is bound in conscience and enslaved, by so much the more, usually, does his esteem as a Christian rise.

The more earnestly he grows under his bondage to sin--the more truly he has to say -

"Reason I hear, her counsels weigh,

And all her words approve;

Yet still I find it hard to obey

And harder yet to love,"

by so much the more, does the world esteem and God abhor, his religion. The good man, they say--he

was all his life-time subject to bondage! He was in doubts and fears all his life? But why did he not come by faith into that liberty with which Christ makes His people free?

6. A morality, based on the most refined selfishness, stands in the highest esteem among men. So good a man of the world, they say--almost a saint; yet God must hold him in utter abomination.

7. The good Christian, in the world's esteem, is never abrupt, never aggressive, yet he is greatly admired. He has a selfish devotion to pleasing men, than which nothing is more admired. I heard of a minister who had not an enemy in the world. He was said to be most like Christ among all the men they knew. I thought it strange that a man so like Christ should have no enemies, for Christ,--more like Himself than any other man can be--had a great many enemies and very better enemies too. Indeed it is said, "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution." But when I came to learn the facts of the case I understood the man. He never allowed himself to preach anything that could displease even Universalists. In fact he had two universalists in his Session. In the number of his session were some Calvinists also, and he must by no means displease them. His preaching was indeed a model of its kind. His motto was--Please the people--nothing but please the people. In the midst of a revival, he would leave the meetings and go to a party; why? To please the people.

Now this may be highly esteemed among men; but does not God abhor it?

It is a light thing to be judged of man's judgment and all the lighter since they are so prone to judge by a false standard. What is it to me that men condemn me if God only approve? The longer I live, the less I think of human opinions on the great question of right and wrong as God sees them. They will judge both themselves and others falsely. Even the church sometimes condemns and excommunicates her best men. I have known cases and could name them, in which I am confident they have done this very thing. They have cut men off from their communion, and now every body sees that the men excommunicated were the best men of the Church.

It is a blessed thought that the only thing we need to care for is to please God.

The only enquiry we need make is--

What will God think of it?

We have only one mind to please; and that the Great Mind of the universe.

Let this be our single aim and we shall not fail to please him.

But if we do not aim at this, all we can do is only an abomination in his sight.

Variety in the Service Offered to God

Lecture VI

May 10, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Isa. 56:4-7: "For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant; even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

Among the people who profess to serve God are three distinct classes, distinguishable by obvious characteristics. It will be my present object to point out these classes and their distinctive marks.

I. The first class are bond-servants;

II. The next class may be called mercenaries;

III. The third and only acceptable class of servants are described in our text.

I. The first class are bond-servants; persons whose ruling motive in all they do is fear.

The service they render is not natural, but constrained. Usually they have a good deal of conviction and an unusual degree of light on religious subjects. They know what sin is and cannot indulge in it without conviction of wrong doing. They have so much sense of religious obligation that they dare not neglect God, but are forced to think often and much of their relations to Him and of His relations to them. Their own personal guilt and danger are often before their minds. It is not uncommon for such persons to dream fearful dreams, their minds being haunted even in sleep by the strong impression that they are wrong and in peril. This fear underlies all their religion. Consequently it makes them strict in what they call their religious duties. And when their fears are specially active they will be specially careful in their business transactions as well as in all their religious duties.

When their convictions of sin and their fears of danger subside, their religious duties are relatively neglected and they become also less strict in their business affairs.

Another mark is that their hope of heaven is more or less strong according as they find themselves more or less strict in their religious duties, and on the other hand is more or less weak according as they indulge their appetites more and are less thorough in their devotions. With the decline of hope comes a revival of fear; and following this, fresh efforts to bring up in the line of duties and strictness. When this is pretty well brought up, hope revives again, the spirit of duty-doing flags; appetite conquers; then comes awful fear again; and so the wheel revolves, bringing up each development in its turn, in one perpetual round.

Again, these persons have no true joy in the service they render to God. It is impossible they should have because their service has no love in it. They have no sympathy or interest in the great ends God has in view, and they cannot have, so long as their hearts are supremely selfish. God chooses for His great end the highest happiness He can produce. If they sympathized with His great end, they would be benevolent. But in order to this, the very fundamental things in their character must be changed.

As they have no interest in God's great end, so have they none in the means He would have them use to promote this end. The thing that supremely interests them is to build up a hope. Hence if they can do a great deal, they obtain a self-righteous satisfaction and a feeling that now they are "engaged" and are doing their duty.

In proportion as they can silence their fears they get more hope and hence they value everything that obviates their fears. They lay the greatest stress upon a "good hope," valuing nothing else in any wise so much. Their hope costs them a great deal. They had to work hard to get it and they have hard and constant trouble to keep it. It needs a deal of nursing, so much that this becomes an important part of their business for life.

In seasons of great fear, they are prone to look at others and comparing themselves with others, they manage to bolster up their hope.

They keep up a sort of warfare against temptation, but their warfare is never triumphant. They find comfort only as they assume that none can gain much victory over sin and temptation in the present life, and as they compare themselves with others.

If they do anything for benevolent objects, fear underlies it all. They fear they shall not be prospered and that the judgments of God will be upon them. They give, under the hope they shall escape God's frown thereby.

They refrain from follies and crimes only for the same reason. Fear underlies all, their nervous temperament is greatly excited by their fears and this becomes the main-spring of all their activities. If you hear them pray or talk, you can at once read their character. They will surely show that fear and hope are the main-springs of their life; that all they do is done, and all they refrain from doing is abstained from because of its bearing on their hopes and their fears. Their fear may embrace various objects; it may be fear of final ruin, or fear of losing reputation or hope.

Again, all their religious works are performed with a sense of drudgery and pain. If they were to speak right out what they think, they would say, religion is a very expensive thing to us. It costs us a great deal of painful self-denial. They would say as a young girl said to me once about her religion. Not long since three young girls came together to see me at my room. The first told me she had got religion. I saw she was gay and dressy, and therefore said to her; "is it not a pity that at your age you should be obliged to become religious and lose all the pleasures this world can give? If you only knew you should not die too soon, would not you enjoy it much better to live as you please, unrestrained by religious obligations?" Yes, said she, if I had only known I should not die, it would no doubt have been pleasant for me to enjoy the world. The second of the three sympathized with her, saying, if she could only have been sure of not dying before she was ready it would have been pleasant to enjoy

more of the world. But the third looked greatly surprised, and then grieved and began to weep. It would be no pleasure, she said, to her to have all this world could give, she could not enjoy it, because it would grieve the Savior. What! said I, would you not like to have the world if you could? No; no: all I want is to please my Savior. I could enjoy nothing unless it should be pleasing to Him. Then I had no occasion to tell the first two they had no religion. The third had answered every question so warmly from her heart and so impressively through her tears, that they needed no other testimony to show them that they had not begun to serve God at all yet.

Many are not aware that the underlying influence in all their religion, is fear. This works deep in their mind; yet they do not analyze their own mental states and go deep even to the core. They really rely much more on public sentiment as to the grounds of a hope, than on any thorough knowledge of what faith is or holiness; as you may see by the interest they feel in noticing what others do for a good hope. What others do for a religion they too strive to do, so as not to fall below the public standard. Others may think them very pious; but at the very moment while others are applauding, they are very uncomfortable, considered in reference to their own state of mind, besides exerting a very uncomfortable influence on others.

Now it is easy to see that all this is really self-service; not any service rendered to God. To this kind of service, God promises no reward. However deep, earnest, constant and uniform it may be, there is nothing in it for God to reward.

II. The next class may be called mercenaries.

They differ constitutionally from the first class; inasmuch as these serve for reward: those, to escape punishment: these act under the influence of hope; those of fear. This second class have little fear and little conscience. The motive power in their minds is the idea of profit. Religion is respectable, especially in a place like this. Indeed, in most places there is a kind of respectability attached to religion which everybody apprehends. Some are very much influenced by this consideration. I remember that about the only time I ever had the observance of the Sabbath urged upon me, it was done by a young man who told me it would give me respectability in society. Look all round you, said he; you will see that the most respectable people go to meeting. It will be much to your profit to associate with them. It will secure you a place in their confidence. Men will employ you. Any slave holder will pay extra for a pious slave. So in every community, attendance on religious worship is profitable, It will secure the confidence of teachers, neighbors, employers; will ensure you better credit and a fairer reputation; will elevate you in society, especially if you go to a respectable church and associate with respectable people. Sabbath keeping is pleasant, and in many respects agreeable.

So it is respectable to give to charitable objects. Many say they never lose anything by giving moderately to charitable objects. They get more patronage in their own business. If they help build churches, they find it pays well. Hence there are the best of reasons for such donations.

In the same manner, prayer is profitable. It will secure the Divine direction in your business, and who cannot afford to pay well for such counsel? In short, all religious duties pay well. This is the reason why mercenary Christians perform them. This love of the profit underlies all their religious duties. They take the same kind of interest in religion that men do in profitable business. God is good, say

they, and hence will be a good paymaster. Said a man to me who was at the point of death, "I am prepared to die, I think; I don't know that I have ever done anything wrong. I have always been to meeting of a Sabbath; I am sure I have always been in my place in the sanctuary." Many who cannot say so much as this think they have done some good to off-set whatever evil they may have done; and since the Lord is not a hard but a generous master, they feel quite confident that He will balance the books in their favor.

This class of persons, as I have said, do not serve God from fear, but from hope. They go into it as a good and a paying business. They do not toil hard, for they don't suppose it necessary, and their toil does not come hard to them, because they expect a handsome reward for it. They work cheerfully as those who are driving a good business. Their religion is not a yoke of bondage. They call it "gospel liberty." They will be all the more earnest and zealous, by how much the stronger are their hope and expectation of eternal life. They are laying up treasure in heaven, why should they not be cheerful and hopeful? They make reward their end; mistake presumption for faith; the love of gain for the love of God. It does not lie before their minds as the love of gain, yet it is so, none the less truly.

Such are only mercenaries. They serve not God but self.

III. The third and only acceptable class of servants are described in our text.

God says of them, "They do the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant. They join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord and to be His servants."

If we trace back the history of this class, we shall find that they once lived in sin; that they became awake to their guilt and convinced of their sin; were led to consider the character of God, the nature and spirit of His law; that they became interested in these objects, so that although they commenced their inquiries under convictions of danger and peril, yet they found themselves interested in God's character; they saw the fitness and excellence of His law and the glory of His gospel, and though they may be quite unable to tell when or where they embraced this gospel and committed themselves to its principles, yet this they know -- that they became intensely interested in God, in Christ, and in the entire scheme of the gospel. They are not thinking now about their hope, but about Christ's work, His great mission; its success and their own responsibilities in promoting it. Look into the heart of one of these Christians; he seems to have dropped all fear, to have forgotten himself; he has ceased to pray much or chiefly for himself; has given himself up to a deep sympathy with the whole movement. When he comes to look within to the state of his inner impulses, he thinks this must be true religion; yet very possibly he had been in this state a long time before he saw it. He started selfishly, but lost his selfishness before the wonderful cross of the Savior! He dropped it there, when he saw and believed the love that God hath toward us. Then and thenceforward his religion became entirely spontaneous. He gave himself up to prayer for others. Neither hope nor fear is uppermost in his mind; but the love of God and the love of man -- these are quite first and uppermost in all the inner workings of his mind. All his religion is spontaneous. He loves his work because he is unified with Christ in His great enterprise and in the all-controlling benevolence of His heart.

Observe also that although this class do not seek hope, yet they have it all the more. They have it the more because they do not seek it. It comes to them by a natural law. It springs up unconsciously and

uncalled for as they find themselves drawn into deeper sympathy with Christ and with holiness, and as they see without an effort that their souls are breathing the spirit of Christ and are already ripe for the benevolent employments of the heavenly state. They cannot perhaps remember the last time they prayed they might get to heaven; but they know they have been nerved day by day to pray that they may be strong in God to do every duty and bear all suffering for His name.

REMARKS.

1. The hope that needs nursing is a snare of death. If you are compelled to take pains to nurse your hope and take pains to keep it alive, rely on what I say, it is a snare of death to your soul.

2. Many as soon as they come to lose their hope are zealous in religion, till they get it back; then their zeal and effort decline. I have lately met with a painful case, in illustration of this. A man called on me as an old acquaintance, so changed however that I could not recognize him at all. He had long been a professed Christian, but long too had he been the veriest slave to intoxicating drink. I never shall forget the impression of a ruined man which his whole appearance made on my mind. He began to relate his recent exercises and said, "I think I have now found the Savior, but I had almost lost my soul because I have been spending this whole winter in trying to regain my lost hope. What a snare that old hope has been to me! It had well nigh ruined me by preventing me from coming to my Savior. My life for many long years has been full of wretchedness. There has been scarce a night for years when the drink has been out of me but I have been in dreadful horror and almost in utter despair. This past winter my mind has been thoroughly aroused to fly for refuge to Christ, yet as I said, I begun with vain efforts to get back my old hope. At last I gave up that pursuit and thought I might better try to find Christ. Through His great mercy, I trust I have found Him."

So, many try to get back an old and perished hope. It would be both easier and safer for them to try to find Christ.

3. Sinners who are here yet unconverted can see the distinction I have made. You can see that the first two classes are not truly religious, but are deeply deluded. You can see what kind of people they are and how they came into such delusions. Some of them are in the seventh of Romans, and never have any other or better Christian experience than that. Said a merchant to me, "I have just lost a brother-in-law by death and I think his history may be of use to you as a warning to others. He was remarkably fond of show, greedy of gain, and loved money as he loved his own soul, and withal was exceedingly fond of making a parade of his wealth; yet he always found it for his interest to be very religious and to do a great deal of religious duty. I saw him when he was at the point of death and said to him -- 'are you really prepared to die?' He replied, 'Yes, no doubt of it. I take this view of the case. If there is a Savior I have got Him, for I have always done all my religious duties; and on the other hand, if there is no Savior, there is no hell and I am safe.' But even now, on the verge of the grave, he was as grasping for money as man could be. Money had all his heart. His faith was mere presumption; a most terrible and fatal mistake! His ruling spirit was a greedy, grasping spirit, and this led him to grasp the rewards of religion among the rest. He laid hold of Christ, in the sense in which he did so at all, only for the sake of future salvation. He wanted to get gain, and since this might be a good investment, lying over in the future state, where he had laid up no other possessions, he thought it wise to lay up a store of religious merit by means of some external duty-doing. If heaven had really

been on sale, his plan might have been successful, that is, if it had been in the market at his price!"

And now, my hearers, let this case and the great truth which underlies it be made thoroughly practical to each heart. Let each one ask himself -- Have I done all my religious duties for reward? Have I been nothing better than a mercenary in God's service? Have I studied only respectability, and done my religious duties only for the sake of my reputation? I charge my soul before God to answer these questions in all truth and honesty. What is the fact in regard to my religious life? Have I thoroughly given myself away to Christ? Have I embarked everything in this great service? How is it with you, my brother -- with you, my sister?

I have been speaking of the third class who are truly religious and who regard themselves as humble followers of Christ; but some of you belong to a class who do not think themselves religious. Will you set yourselves to find the place where you do belong? Consider that the first two classes whom I have described have no reward whatever. You can see for yourselves that they are not honestly serving God as His true servants. Settle it therefore in your minds that you do not want such a religion. Those who are not seeking reward, but who serve God from love are the only true Christians and are all the more sure of reward by how much the less selfishly they seek it. Nay more, they have their reward here as they go along, and cannot help having it, in their very hearts as well as through the Divine favor, because they really give up their souls to benevolence as God does. Benevolence is its own reward, and would be reward enough even if there were no God, or if God should see fit not to superadd His blessing. But God will superadd His blessing, as truly as He is good.

Hence none but the real Christian makes any real profit from his religion. And he gets his profit not because he seeks it in a mercenary spirit, but because he gives himself up to doing the will of God with all his heart, and leaves the whole question of profit and reward with his Lord and Master.

License, Bondage and Liberty

Lecture VII

May 24, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Rom. 8:15: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

In a sermon preached recently, I said that the Lord had three classes of servants; bondmen, mercenaries and those who serve Him in love. I wish now to make another three-fold distinction. Persons may be classified according to their spirit. Some have a spirit of license; others a spirit of

bondage; and others a spirit of true Christian liberty. Into one or the other of these classes, all moral agents who have any knowledge of God must necessarily fall. It will be my present object to develop the prominent characteristics of each several class.

I. The spirit of license.

II. Some detail of those who have the spirit of bondage.

III. To consider the case of those who have the spirit of liberty.

I. The first class have what I call the spirit of license.

License differs essentially from liberty. License is selfishness unrestrained by moral considerations--a state in which men do as they list, with no fear of God before their eyes, and follow out their own selfish ends without moral restraint.

Its characteristics are,

- 1. An undeveloped conscience. They have had so little moral training that their views on moral questions are yet immature, or merely negative, and not infrequently erroneous. To this class I once belonged. Many things which I have since regarded as gross sins, gave me then no trouble. My conscience was undeveloped. Nothing had then transpired to develop it. Some of my earliest impressions of moral restraint were produced by seeing my mother weep because my father would let his sons go to the lake fishing on the Sabbath. Her tears reminded me forcibly that there was something wrong in this. I was then old enough to know all about such matters of duty, but not having my attention turned to these subjects, I remained practically as if I had no conscience.
- 2. Others have only a seared conscience. These go on much as if they had no conscience at all, although they may have had a conscience very considerably developed. They can recollect when they could not lie or swear. Tempted, they were often obliged to refrain by the demands of conscience. Now they are inclined perhaps to smile over their former notions.
- 3. Others are not restrained, although ever so much upbraided. They have no faith in the great things revealed of God. Indeed they act as if there were no God, for although they admit His existence, they allow it to have no practical influence on their minds. They have no practical regard for what is morally right. Having no vivid sense of moral obligation, their minds are wholly open to the impulses of selfishness. If they forbear to cheat, lie, or steal, it is not through any moral consideration, but under the influence of some form of selfishness. They manifest the spirit of license in this particular, that conscience has no practical control over them. The desire to do good has no influence. They do not care to do any good, although they know they have the power and the opportunity.

Here let me stop and ask, how it is with you in this respect? What testimony do your heart and life bear when tried by such tests as these? Are you living as you know you

ought not to live? Are you doing what your conscience condemns? Are you going on in your own way, despite of all God may require, under a spirit of moral recklessness? Let this matter be inquired into. You may not be reckless as to other considerations; but if you are so as to moral considerations, the fact ought to alarm you. If the motives which ought to control you fail of doing so, your heart must be fearfully wrong. If your condition is such that others, in order to influence you, must appeal to something besides conscience, and the sense of duty, you may know that you are far gone in moral recklessness and ruin.

- 4. It is curious to see how this downward tendency acts on the moral nature. The perception of moral principles grows dim; moral relations seem to fade away gradually from the mind. The man will tell you he doubts whether such and such things are sinful at all. He does not quite see how there need be any wrong in them. If you try to point out to him their moral qualities and relations, you are amazed to find, that his perceptions on such questions are so dull that you cannot make him see a sin. This is naturally the state of all those who have the spirit of license, for if persons have clear, sharp moral perceptions, they will fall into one of the two later classes. The men of license you will find have but few moral principles. Singularly, you will see that these principles have dropped out of their mind, until there is little of that sort left. They can now laugh over the commission of sins which once made them sweat with agony. All moral principles become lax in their minds. Things once deemed wrong they learn to excuse; look back on their former scruples as superstitious and foolish; and talk largely of their "progress"--little thing, alas, that their way of progress is towards hell.
- 5. Persons in youth, having the spirit of license, will manifest in it their pleasure loving tendencies, and in their passion for dress. Amusement is often their chief delight, and of course their spirit of license develops itself in this direction. What, they say, were we not made that we might enjoy ourselves? Does not God like to see us happy? But if you search carefully into their state of mind you will see that they are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" that they care little as to what will please God, but much for what will please themselves. They know how to excuse anything which it pleases them to do.
- 6. Developments of the same reckless spirit vary according to age and tastes. As the young are pleasure-loving, the middle-aged are covetous and money-loving; or perhaps they aspire after distinction in their professions. Whither the heart goes, in that direction, you will find the spirit of license in sin developing itself. Under such a state of moral feeling, men will be sure to leave a broad margin for deviations from moral right. They can justify a great many dishonest ways of getting gain; or of promoting their favorite schemes of ambition.

It is striking and sad to see how their worldly-mindedness can deface and even efface all their notions of right and of wrong; how they will plead for sin; defend various forms of sin and indulgence; roll their sin as a sweet morsel under the tongue--unscrupulously violate the Sabbath--allow themselves almost any amount of latitude in their direction, especially if among strangers; take a little strong drink and say--What's the harm if nobody knows it and it brings no disgrace? In business, what will they not do if they can escape detection? If there is danger of detection, they will call it a mistake and rectify it,--a thing they never do for the sake of the moral principle. In political life, they manage any way to subserve their ends, their object being, never the general good, but always

their own personal interests. In whatever form of self-seeking, they care not for the eye of God, nor for the dictates of conscience.

- 7. The law of progress with all men of this class is from bad to worse. If you notice where they started and trace along their secret history, you will see this distinctly and fearfully illustrated. You, young men, who yield yourselves to sin, do you not see that your law of progress is from bad to worse? And you, young women, if you give yourselves up to license in sin?

Some of you have been almost surfeited with religious instruction. You have heard prayers enough and have seen tears enough to melt any heart but yours. Where will you be when once removed forever from these restraints and given up to the full sweep of that fearful law of downward progress?

For those whose conscience has been rightly developed, I have great hope. How many have we seen here who, when they first came among us, had hardly conscience enough to make them appear decent in the house of God; but not having been hardened, they began to listen, and as they listened began to feel and think. Soon you meet them in the enquiry meeting; and then soon, at the feet of Jesus.

On the other hand, some go the other way. Already hardened fearfully, they wince under the truth; their hearts rebel against it; they fall into some low form of skepticism--cast off God and His truth, and with fearful strides rush downward, downward, to the depths of hell!

Where, young men, are you? And ye of every age and of all conditions, professing or not professing piety, let me ask you to apply these tests to your own heart and life. Where are you? Have you the spirit of license? and more than all, let me ask, Have you that most fearful of all symptoms of being far gone in the way of death,--that, knowing your state to be as bad as it can be, yet you do not care?

II. I must next speak with some detail of those who have the spirit of bondage.

- 1. Very commonly, yet improperly, those who have this spirit are called conscientious Christians. They get this name especially because they differ so widely from those who have the spirit of license. It is true, this class differs very much from that. Their conscience is not seared, but tender; is not undeveloped or inactive, but wakeful and efficient in certain directions. Yet they are not properly conscientious, because they do not go deep enough. Their conscience reaches only to the exterior of life--not to the interior. It restrains them from external conduct which they deem wrong, but does not control the heart. It is a conscience, without either faith or love. Hence their life is not spontaneously after the will of God. They are in bondage in the sense that they are not at liberty to do what they would like. Since their heart does not sympathize with God, all His ways are irksome and all their own ways, pleasant; so that of course all their religious duties must come hard. Now if their hearts were truly given to God, they would be filled with the Spirit, and nothing could so please them as the things that please God. In such a state, they can serve God without bondage,

"Tis love that makes our cheerful feet,

In swift obedience move--"

and this obedience is the highest freedom and the purest blessedness. When the heart is right it asks nothing wrong, and men have only to go according to their heart; or more strictly, they have only to follow the Lord, and to this the heart makes no resistance but yields with the utmost delight.

- 2. But those whose hearts are yet in sin, yet who do a bond-service--for God as they suppose, but really for self; they would fain lessen their religious services if they might. They would stay away from religious meetings if it would do. They lust for the fleshpots of Egypt, and would return thither if they dared. They are in bondage to their consciences. For the sake of peace with conscience, they conform to its dictates in part, in the way of compromise, pleading to be let off as much as possible, and making the best turns they can, as men are wont to do with a hard master.

Again, this class are in bondage to God, serving Him, so far as they render Him any service, in the spirit of slaves, not of sons. They think they must be religious, or do worse, and they are afraid of the worse alternative. They would do many things which God forbids, but they dare not. Hence they submit, yet the heart yields only the form of service.

- 3. They are in bondage to the church. They are afraid of censure. To have Christians watch over them is about equivalent to having spies environing their path. So far from rejoicing to have the kind and watchful eye of brethren and sisters on them, they feel this to be an unwelcome restraint.

Now, beloved, how does this test apply to your heart?

- 4. This class abound in resolutions. These constitute their principal Christian exercises. To make resolutions and to break them; to endeavor, yet to fail to perform; to resolve and resolve, yet go on as ever--this is their religious history. The reason is, they never break up the deep foundations of selfishness and let their souls settle down into the great depths of benevolence.
- 5. They are often greatly pressed with conviction, a deep sense of sin troubles them; conscience upbraids; they say, or omit to say many things for which they condemn themselves, and hence they feel exceedingly uneasy. If they are students they scarcely get a lesson. In fact they are simply convicted sinners, not converted saints.

Again, their knowledge of their own case controls the judgment they form of others, and hence they judge others harshly. They cannot conceive how a Christian can smile without sin. They do not understand that buoyancy of spirit which is so congenial to the peaceful Christian. Always dissatisfied with themselves, how can they be satisfied with others? Always conscious of doing wrong, how can they, naturally, judge otherwise of their friends? Their own mind screwed up under a feeling of bondage and a sense of constraint, they give no credit for honest piety to those who walk peacefully and calmly in the light

of the Savior's presence. Spontaneously forming harsh judgments, first of themselves, and next of others, they have no idea what a change would come over these judgments of others if once they were to come themselves into gospel liberty. Set these bond-servants to the work of Christian discipline; they almost never reclaim or reform the offender. It is quite beyond their power to love him down--for the love is not in them.

Or let another commence discipline in the church; and you will find them almost surely throwing themselves in the way. Their sympathies will be on the side of the wrong-doer. They will treat everything as persecution which is intended to reform and subdue.

- 6. Commonly they are strict and punctual in their religious duties, yet not willingly and joyfully, but of constraint. Take the constraint away, and no such duties would be done.
- 7. In these religious duties, they get no real comfort. The true child of God gets real comfort without seeking it; this class seek it much and long, but in vain. They value it highly; want somebody to give them comfort, applaud the ministers who speak comfortably to them; but, not complying with the conditions of comfort, they must fail to find it.
- 8. They have but little hope, and that unsettled, hard to keep, of little practical worth. Anxious, unhappy, an annoyance to others, they are prone to be sour, morose and censorious. It is natural they should misunderstand those who pass into real peace by submission to God. When they see such persons enter a state of gospel light and liberty, they are alarmed, and say, "How can he be so cheerful? What can make him so light-hearted? There must be something wrong." Now persons under the spirit of bondage have not gone far enough even to see where the peaceful Christian stands.
- 9. They are also characterized by a religious zeal and a sanctimoniousness which must needs put on something, and which to a discerning eye will have the air of something put on, and not spontaneous. It is not a natural solemnity, but a constrained formality.
- 10. Their prayers amount to this, that they may be converted. They do not so understand it, for they think they have been converted, perhaps long ago; yet their convictions lead them to pray for just what would, if granted, be conversion. The amount of their prayer is that God would give them repentance, a new heart, gospel faith; in short would make them Christians. They struggle earnestly, in their way, but going perpetually about to establish their own righteousness, they come not into gospel rest.
- 11. With them, religion seems a hard business--as it always must seem to be, while the heart is wrong. What, they say, how can a man love God with all his heart? How can one love his neighbor as himself? The best they can do is to struggle on and find no peace. One perpetual round of tasked duty-doing makes up their religion. In it all, there is no real service done for God, from a heart devoted lovingly to His character and service. Such have only the spirit of bondage again to fear.

III. I am next to consider the case of those who have the spirit of liberty.

Some understand Christian liberty to be the privilege of doing as they please, right or wrong: but they greatly mistake; for this is only license.

Liberty, psychologically considered, is the power to do the contrary--the free ability to choose and to act otherwise than the actual choice. But, considered in reference to the Christian life, it may be better defined as the spirit of doing right spontaneously. The heart is united to God by thoroughly choosing His ends, and hence become unified with Him in sympathy and interest, even as the son with the father whom he respects and loves.

The Bible here in our context speaks of Christians as being "sons of God." It represents them as becoming sons both by being begotten of His Spirit in regeneration; and by adoption. Indeed the Spirit of God dwells in them, takes up His abode in their hearts; and hence creates a living union between their souls and His. They come to have the same great reason for action--the same radical purpose and aim,--that God Himself has. They have chosen the same great end, have adopted the same views; submit their heart to the control and guidance of His truth and Spirit; so that genuine benevolence issues from their very hearts, spontaneously. Hence a harmony with God in their ends, aims and affections, becomes an established, settled state; and they are really no more in bondage than Christ Himself was. You need not appeal to their conscience to prick them on to duty. They have a conscience, to be sure; but it is to them a guide, not a goad; a very important distinction. Their conscience is not a goad, under which they move along, stung, wincing, bleeding; but a guide--given of God to lead their way and point out moral relations. When cordially accepted as a guide, it has no sting; it comes not to lacerate, any more than if it were wrapped in the softest silk. As soon as the heart settles and sinks sweetly into the will of God, conscience needs no rod--no scorpion sting--not even a word of command; it has only to say--"This is the way, Here you are to go--this is the will of your Father in heaven."

Persons not in this state and strangers to it may suppose that your conscience has fallen away and dropt out. It was said of a wife; "She is dutiful, but has no love." But suppose this woman is married to one she tenderly loves, to whom her heart is bound with bonds stronger than death. She might then say--it seems as if I had no conscience. Formerly it was compelled to be a goad, and not merely a guide; but now it has no such work to do as before; the heart needs only to know the way and it rejoices with great joy to walk therein.

This is a spirit of spontaneous co-operation with God. It is love acting itself out and manifesting itself in a way natural and easy. Everything is done as is supposed will please God. The mind acts on high principles; the law of love and of God is written on the heart; all obedience is natural and free because spontaneous and in harmony with the supreme choice. This is the full idea of Christian liberty: acting as we please when our pleasure is to act only right; taking the right course because this pleases God, and nothing can please us but what pleases Him. The mind entrusts all its own interests and destinies with God. To Him is committed the future, otherwise all unknown and untried; to Him the mind commends the present with its toils and interests; and to Him the past in the hope of free forgiveness through a Redeemer. Hence the soul is free and at ease. It is conscientious in the true sense; its state and acts being so entirely in harmony with an enlightened conscience that it comes into no collision with its dictates. All is right, says the conscience; and of course there is peace, so long as religious feeling and duty are spontaneous.

REMARKS.

1. It is hardly necessary to say that the first class which I have described--having the spirit of license--are spiritually blind and dead. This is abundantly obvious. The second class--men in bondage--are regarded as very exemplary Christians, but they are in fact only convicted sinners. That they are not saved is very evident from the fact that they are constantly praying for salvation--that is--when they are stirred up to any religious exercise. You may try to get them to pray and to labor for others; you cannot; they fall right back to praying for themselves. After preaching one evening, I went to the library room of the church, and at the door a young lady met me, and said she wanted to speak with me. She wanted to ask me what she should do to be saved. Her father, long a leading man in the church was by; so, after talking awhile with the daughter, I said--let us pray for this dear child of yours. He seemed as one confounded; I observed his strange appearance, yet thought it best to press on our work; and therefore said: You lead first in prayer for your daughter, and I will follow. He prayed awhile, yet for himself only. He had not the face to say even once--"Lord, have mercy on my daughter." He could only say--"Lord have mercy on me." Not one word could he say for her, though under such circumstances of heart-thrilling interest.

2. It is of no use to try to drive a person out of this rut; they will forever slump back into it. But as soon as they come into the liberty of the gospel, it becomes as natural as their breath to pray for sinners. A forcible illustration of this occurred in a meeting for enquiry in which I had no assistance. I spoke to them a while to try to lead them to Christ, and then proposed to pray. Before I commenced, I said to them--after I close, if any of you want to pray, just open your mouth and your heart freely. After I stopped, one of them began; prayed a minute for himself; seemed really to come in humble faith to Christ; and then immediately began to pray for the one next to him. When he stopped, this next one began in the same way, first for himself; then coming to Christ, he launched out in most earnest prayer for his next neighbor. So the thing went on for a long time, each praying first for himself, and till his heart committed itself to Jesus; and then pouring out its prayer for sinners. It was a most affecting season, and especially instructive as showing how naturally the heart that has laid itself over upon the arms of the Savior prays for those yet in their sins.

3. Those who are really in bondage often remain so through pride. They are not humble enough to disclose their real state. When a full pouring out of their souls in confession would do them good and would honor the gospel, they refrain, too proud to take their place before God and man as humbled penitents. Especially is the danger extreme when those who have held a prominent position in the church get into bondage. Often such persons never get out. I could tell you of many cases that would surprise you. They are prone to say--If I confess, I shall stumble others. Who will believe I am converted, or will have any confidence in me if I confess the real truth of myself? Hence Satan shuts them in all round about, and few persons of any class are in so great a danger of losing their souls.

4. Persons in bondage often seem to themselves to have a much deeper sense of sin than those who are in gospel liberty. They think so, but they are entirely mistaken. Those who are free in the gospel have altogether the keenest sense of sin. Yet the bones broken under the law are set and healed, and God has caused rejoicing where only pains were before. But if persons from this state were to fall into sin, you would see their conscience wake to a searching and a fearful retribution.

5. Young men who have not associated with Christians who were in gospel liberty and acting under the impulses of love, will almost always have false conceptions of religion. Their idea of it will lack the amenities and the charities of the true gospel life. They do not see how anybody can be in such a state as not to lust after the flesh-pots of selfishness. They have no conception of that state in which the soul rises to a new class of aspirations and sympathies--in which it ascends far above the murky and foul atmosphere of earth, and bathes itself in the love and the light of heaven. They need to come into close communion with Christians who are in this state before they can properly appreciate the idea of religion.

Do you, my hearers, lack this glorious gospel light and liberty? How is it with you today? Those of you who are not professors; what attitude will you take? Is it not time that you should set your face towards your Father's house, saying:--From this day, my whole heart is thine? What do you say to this! Is it not time that you should get out of darkness?

Think of your bondage. Is it not time that you should awake and accept the offered boon of freedom? Jesus Christ has proclaimed you free, if you will; and is it not time that you should accept it? Will you longer remain of choice a slave?

In some of the southern States, the emancipation of a slave is so great a matter that it is done only by means of special forms and by a solemn public transaction. The master brings his slave before the court and there in a special form makes out and subscribes his papers, and thus gives the slave his freedom.

A far more wonderful transaction has taken place in another quarter; a far higher court has been in session; nay, the supreme Executive of the universe has come forth to act on this great emancipation, and has made out true papers for giving gospel liberty to a race of lost, enslaved sinners. Had you heard of this? The thing was done many years ago, but the business still lingers unfinished. In fact there have not been messengers enough to carry the glad news yet to every creature; and what is worse, very many to whom it has come cannot be persuaded to accept the boon. Hence much time has been lost and the work still lingers. And now what will you do with this proposal? It comes to you; what will you do with it? Do you say, "I am not a slave;" ah, but you are, and you know it! Do you say, "If I were only sure that I could get such a religion--one of true gospel liberty--I would have it"? Let me tell you, there is no other true religion, none. All other is counterfeit. You can have this if you will.

Suppose a young man here should say--"If you can tell me what to do, I will do it. Any thing I can do, I am ready to do." This would be hopeful and right; and nothing less than this can be right. How many of you will pledge yourselves to do your duty, if you should be told what it is? If you are willing to do what God requires you to do to be saved even to the cutting off a right hand, then you can be readily directed to Christ and you may surely come and find life and peace. But many sinners come and ask what they shall do, and then, having heard, they refuse to do it. They come to the door and knock; but when bidden to come in, they say--"O no, I had no thought of coming in;" and turn coolly, or it may be, scornfully, away. Alas, "the turning away of the simple shall slay them!" They cannot many times repel the gospel from their hearts and dash salvation's offered cup from their lips, and yet be

welcomed in, when they shall have pressing occasion to call in fearful earnest for admission.

Living by Faith

Lecture VIII

June 7, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Hab. 2:4: "The just shall live by faith."

These words which occur first in Habakkuk are quoted in Gal. 3:11 and again in Heb. 10:38. They express a great truth which has a specially rich and important development in the gospel.

I. I will first explain the sense in which all men live by faith; and

II. The sense in which the just live by faith.

I. Faith is not merely an intellectual state.

- 1. It is more than a mere conviction or state of being convinced. We do not reach the radical idea till we get to the heart, and till we find in this term, faith, the heart's confidence--a trusting in which the heart reposes on the word or character of one deemed worthy of confidence. It is a phenomenon of the will--it being of necessity a thing of free choice whether we will or will not refuse confidence, it being supposed that the intelligence sees good reason for such confidence.
- 2. In its generic signification it may be applied to any thing in which we repose confidence. Any exercise of mind in which we yield it up to confide and to trust is faith.
- 3. All intelligent beings live by faith in some thing. Little children live by faith, and it is striking to observe how much this is true of them. Indeed unreflecting persons do not by any means conceive how universal this principle is and must be, and how necessary to the existence of social and sentient beings. Even little children must learn to have faith in the use of their muscles, else they would not venture to trust themselves upon their feet at all. Nor would any sane man eat his daily food but for faith. He has faith in his cook that she has not poisoned it. He must have faith that this food will do him good and will not kill him. Without faith men would not dare lie down to sleep. They must have some confidence in their fellow beings that they will be permitted to sleep without being murdered. In fact men would not dare to do any thing which implies peaceful repose unless they lived by faith. Without faith, there could be no

repose of mind--nothing but sleepless and intense solicitude. In this state no man could live. His very solitudes would wear out his nerves and crush down his physical system.

- 4. All families must live by faith, or rather they could not live without it. Even a pirate ship could not be managed without it. An old adage says--"There is honor among thieves;" and obviously, if there were not, there could be no such thing as organized thievishness, or association in mischief of any sort. They who need the help or sympathies of others in their enterprise must of necessity live by faith.
- 5. It is astonishing to see how much faith there is in every thing. Look at men any where in any relations; you see them living by faith. If you, young people, had not faith, you would not be trying to get an education. Society could not get along in any form it may assume, without faith. Farmers would neither plant nor sow; nobody would bestow labor for the sake of future good results; nothing could be done,--without faith. If faith should utterly cease, the race must perish. You would be surprised, if you were to reflect, to see how soon the entire race must perish if faith were to cease. Faith is the great secret of their being--the underlying condition of their continued existence.
- 6. Without faith we overcome no obstacles, for we make no efforts. And who does not know that we never accomplish anything useful without effort? All useful things then must go undone, if it were not for faith. God has so constituted the universe that faith must be in exercise or its necessary processes must be arrested and ruin come down on all created beings.
- 7. On the other hand, in proportion as faith exists, society moves along admirably. An army, held together in strong and perfect discipline, owes its bond of strength to faith. A school well ordered, in diligence pursuing its noble work, lives by faith. A family, loving by promoting each others' interests, moving along with helpful labors and cares, have their central power in faith.
- 8. Of course I am speaking here only of faith in the generic, not the religious, sense. If confidence really exists, in all these multiform relations, then all goes right; all moves along smoothly. But if faith is lacking, every thing is wrong, necessarily and eternally so.
- 9. It is common for skeptics to sneer at Christianity because it makes so much account of faith. They seem to assume that they have no need of faith, in anything. It would be easy to show that of all men, religious skeptics must be most credulous and must have most faith, of some sort. The chief peculiarity in their case is, that having rejected the light and the evidence of truth through their radical enmity of heart against it, they are shut up to the necessity of believing things without evidence and against evidence as their only resort. They are compelled to believe that to "leap into the dark" at death is the best ending of human life.

But I must pass from this subject and proceed to inquire,

II. What is religious faith?

- 1. It differs from other faith in its objects, but not essentially in its nature. But I ought first to say that Christians have naturally faith like other men and women. They have the same faith in

a general sense which is common to society and to human nature every where.

- 2. They have also more than this; they have a Christian faith, by which they live a Christian life. The secret of this Christian life is the faith they have in the Son of God. This faith "works by love." Their confidence in Christ, in all he says and does, weds their souls to him and begets unceasing love.
- 3. Their confidence in Christ's benevolence makes it a present reality to their souls, and hence the influence of such a presence of love cannot fail to inspire a corresponding love in their hearts towards Christ and his people, and indeed, towards all creatures. Thus they become conscious of both affectional and emotional love. Without confidence in God and in Christ, they could not live such a life of faith. The motive would be wanting. How could they have peace with God, except through faith in Christ's atonement as the ground of reconciliation? How could they walk in the strength of the Lord without faith in his exceedingly great and precious promises? How bring their hearts under the influence of all the great truths of the gospel, unless they have a religious faith in those truths?
- 4. Many Christians complain of the lack of emotion in their religious exercises, but overlook the great reason of their deficiency. They do not seem to see that the fountain out of which proceeds the strong, deep, flow of emotion, is no other than faith. See that daughter. She sits down to write to unbosom her soul. See how her faith in her mother's love opens the great fountain of her emotions. That mother's character is before her mind a present reality. She never can question the strength or the fulness of her mother's love. Hence when her attention turns to her mother, a thousand thoughts rush upon her mind, "and tears unbidden start."

Is it any wonder that a Christian's faith should in like manner inspire his affections and quicken his emotion?

- 5. By faith, the just live a life of obedience. Faith works by love, and love inspires the heart to obey. Faith brings the soul into such union and harmony with God that love and obedience become a second nature. Nothing can be more easy and natural than to obey where there is love and faith. If you confide in your Heavenly Father you will of course try to please him.

Again, by faith, you will love a life of submission to all God's providences. Adverse providences will of course cross your path in this earthly state; but if you confide in your Heavenly Father, you will pass smoothly along, submissive and satisfied that he who rules all does all things well. Said a man to me, only the other day--"I hold to this--that whatever occurs to me and mine will work for my good. If any loss befalls me, do I not know it shall be in some way for my gain? I know it must be. If one of my horses dies, it is all best. God will make it up in some spiritual good." Another man said to me--"If I set my heart upon accomplishing any object, make efforts for it, and succeed, it is well; and if I do not succeed, than it is well. I know the failure must be better than the success, else God would have given me the success. Do I not know that He will give me the best thing? It does not follow that He was displeased with me for making the efforts which He saw it best to frustrate. He expects me to act according to my best light and judgment; then if He sees a still better way and frustrates my way, all is well." Now I ask you, how

could these men feel this repose and this submission to God's providence without faith?

- 6. So a man learns to adjust himself to the providence of God, as a ship at sea on the tops of the bounding waves. If anything comes dashing across his path and blasting his plans, gradually by his faith in God he adjusts himself to the blast and sings, "all is well, for it is my Father!" He trains himself from his first conversion to this self-adjustment by faith, even as the infant on his new and untrained limbs, learns to balance himself on the center of gravity, gaining new skill by each day's practice, until you are surprised to see what evolutions he can make with the utmost apparent ease and safety. So in the Christian's life; the trustful Christian learns to adjust himself suddenly to the blasts that strike him under the vicissitudes of God's providence, and keep his mind upright and on its balance, however sudden may be the changes which pass over him. He learns to apply every where those great truths he has learned of God. He holds practically that all God does is best. Hence he can pass through trials with calm and heavenly resignation. He expects to come out at last as Jacob did. You recollect Jacob began with saying--"Joseph is dead, and Simeon is dead; and ye will take Benjamin away also; all these things are against me." Did man ever make a greater mistake? Joseph was not dead, but was sent onward to the granary of the world to provide means of subsistence not for Jacob's family only, but for the whole nations. Simeon was not dead. All these things were not against him but for him, in the highest sense; and the good old man lived to see how sadly he had misinterpreted the ways of God towards himself and his house. So the fierce blast smites many a soul, and the poor man, weak in faith, staggers under the blow and trembles through great fear; but soon he gathers up his confidence, and lifting his head above the surging billows, he cries out, "All is well!" What though the lightnings flash and the thunders roar; what though darkness and storm combine their terrors; why shall he tremble? Is not God on the throne, high above and over all?

So the Christian lives exempt from care, bearing his burdens without distraction because he rolls them over upon the Lord. In the midst of business ever so complicated, his mind rests sweetly in the Lord--his faith causing his soul to have rest.

- 7. He has peace in God because he is justified by faith. His own soul has internal peace, because through faith he is sanctified. How could he have peace in either of these respects if he did not embrace Jesus Christ and his revealed plan of atonement by his blood and of cleansing by his Spirit?
- 8. In like manner by faith men live a joyous life, and a useful life. Faith lays the foundation for both the silent influence of a good example and for the active influence of direct efforts. You can look for neither without a living faith.
- 9. By faith men live a humble life. By faith they learn to take a low place. Indeed the very idea of faith involves humility; just as the idea of doing all yourself and trusting to no one for help, implies self-sufficiency and independence. The Christian is emptied of self-reliance ere he can be filled of Christ. He sees he has nothing to be proud of; that humility becomes him; and that his spirit must accept this low position ere he can receive all fulness of grace from his Lord.
- 10. By faith he lives a cheerful life. Generally the tenor of the life of faith is cheerful. Satisfied with God and his providence, why should he not be cheerful? He has occasion to rejoice

evermore. God will bring out such glorious results, and his faith so distinctly anticipates them; he cannot but know that the church is safe, and that all he loves on earth is safe.

- 11. By faith he lives a self-denying life. If he has faith he will not make much of the little petty comforts of this life. His soul is upon far greater and better things. Why should he care for these little things when souls are to be saved or lost? He can afford to deny himself of almost every earthly comfort in order to save a soul, or to please his Lord and Master. When he encounters labor and toil, glad to go to the very ends of the earth on the gospel mission, he knows he has nothing to fear and no reason to anticipate loss to himself. It is true he does not go for the sake of personal gain; but he goes, deeply conscious that he is pursuing the most truly valuable objects and pursuing them because they are most truly valuable. As for his own reward, he knows he finds it in large measures in his work itself, and as for the future, he cheerfully leaves it with God. Without faith, such a life would be hard indeed; but with faith, why should he fear poverty, or persecution or shame? All is right--all is well enough. Who cannot afford to submit to all this, so long as his soul reposes in faith on his God?
- 12. By faith he lives a spiritual life, and not a merely natural one. His life is spiritual, not in the abused and perverted sense in which modern necromancers use the word, but in the sense of being in real communion with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God dwells in his heart by faith.
- 13. By faith he lives a prayerful life. It is natural for him to pray. He loves prayer, and breathes it even as he breathes the atmosphere. He has confidence in God and expects blessings in answer to prayer. Such a man has reasons enough for much prayer.
- 14. His life of faith is hopeful. He is not easily discouraged, for his confidence rests in the mighty God. He expects to succeed in doing all that God would have him do; and why should he wish to do more? Is he a minister of the Gospel, going forth to preach? He goes hopeful. Why should he not? He expects success in the name of the Lord if he has faith.
- 15. He will by faith lead an active life. Faith will spur on his activities. Under an earnest faith in divine truth, how can he help being active and zealous? If he believes God's word, he will believe in the fearful peril of sinners, and in the awful doom that awaits them. How can he desist and abstain from labor for souls so long as he sees them stand on slippery places, with fiery billows rolling below? Will he not devote himself with untiring diligence to pluck whomsoever he can from the ruin of a lost sinner?
- 16. Faith secures sympathy with God. Confidence in any man ensures your sympathy with him. So if you have confidence in God, you will give him the warm and earnest sympathies of your heart. Unbelief locks up the heart against sympathy with God; but faith opens it wide. It is wonderful to see how true faith in God opens the gate ways of the soul and lets in the waters of spiritual life and power.
- 17. Faith makes the Christian's life humane. It trains him to look on all as God's children and to love them and care for them as such. Seeing how much pity and forbearance God has towards

his sinning creatures, he is drawn by his faith to exercise the same.

- 18. By faith he lives a life of Gospel liberty. He is not in bondage to law or to fear. He does not pray because he is obliged to, but because he trusts and loves. All right mental exercises are spontaneous, God by his Spirit writing his own law on the heart. It would be easy to show that a life of faith secures all these results.

These results constitute real life. Hence we see how eminently and how universally it must be true that the just shall live by faith.

REMARKS.

1. Natural faith--such as unconverted men have in men and things--is useful to society--to the ends of business--to the comfort, not to say, the subsistence, of families. It is always useful so far as it goes, yet it is not virtue, for it does not have respect to God, to his character, or his law. It may be good and useful, yet not be virtue, for it co-exists with selfishness and with enmity to God. Pirates may, nay must have it; yet are pirates, therefore, good citizens!

It is not saving faith, for it does not save men from sin, does not fit men for heaven.

2. Both in its ground and exercise, faith is perfect in heaven. Faith being perfect there, the state of society and the happiness of sentient beings there must be perfect. If faith were not perfect, society even in heaven could not be. All is right there because faith is perfect and universal.

3. All men who come to the knowledge of the gospel ought to live a life of faith. Strange that men do not see its value and its excellence. In my early life I took this view of faith and of the Christian life. In studying the great truths which they claim to believe, I said, I can account for the way Christians live by the nature of what they believe. Believing that Christ died for them, how can they do otherwise than love him and live to please and serve him? Believing thus, they must, rationally, act thus. This belief must be of the utmost value to them, so long as they live in this world, whether the things they believe are true or false. This reasoning of mine did not assume the truth of the Bible, but merely brought out the relations of the Christian life to those statements, whether true or false.

But after a little more reflection on the matter, it occurred to me that the very fact of the universal utility of this faith proves its divine origin and the divine truth of the things believed. Christian faith does in fact fit men for heaven; this proves its doctrine to be divine. It cannot be a lie; for no lie could have such results. It is impossible that a system can be false, which, believed, makes men so pure and holy. The fruits of Christian faith prove the Bible true, therefore, unless we accept the absurdity that to believe a lie will lift men above the world, will renovate their hearts and restore them to God's own image; and who can believe this?

4. That man is far from being a philosopher as from being a Christian who does not know that true Christian faith is the essential condition of perfect society either in this world or the world to come. It must be the necessary condition of the mind's being in a perfect state. It must be ever present in that society which constitutes heaven.

5. The life of faith in Christ is too peculiar to be mistaken. It is said of Christians that they are a "peculiar people." They have a peculiar faith. They believe things which elevate the soul, purify the heart, raise the mind above the influence of sordid things and place it aloof from the debasing influences of sensuality, and all things low and mean. Faith in Christ must produce a life which will be its own witness. Look over society any where, and your eye must recognize the man who lives by faith. Such faith as the true Christian has must create a life so peculiar as to be readily distinguished from every other life.

6. Saving faith is in its very nature saving. Many think of this saving as only future--as only rescuing the soul at death from final perdition. This is a great and a grievous mistake. This Christian faith is that by which men live, not that by which they die. They are saved here first, and saved hereafter, because they are first saved here. If faith ever saves the soul, it must be first here. It saves them into happiness in heaven because it has first saved them into holiness on earth.

7. All men, not grossly ignorant, can see the nature and value of gospel faith. A man must be exceedingly stupid who can live in a world where faith is exhibited before his eyes, talked of all around him; and yet not be interested in the inquiry--What is this? How are these results produced? If he looks into this matter, he cannot but see that the truths taught in the gospel need only be believed, and the results will be of the very greatest value to the soul. Let me ask that sinner whose aims hitherto have never risen above the mere enjoyments of time; suppose you were not to believe the gospel for yourself, understanding it in a good degree as it is; you give it full credence, embracing it with all its precious provisions and promises; do you think it would be strange if you should then say, "I have enjoyed more in one hour than in all my life before"? Ye who are in your sins can know but little yet of the great things of the gospel. You have never yet believed things which could give you more than a feverish pleasure, transient and deceptive. You have never yet believed any thing high, inspiring, ennobling. Now take your stand--point of vision above the great ocean of truth. Ascend the "Delectable Mountains," from whence you can take in a broad and clear view of the "Celestial City." Lo, there is a palace, built of God, for his saints from earth. Did you ever see a royal palace? Have you ever scanned the lofty walls, the glittering towers, the artificial lakes, the gardens, lawns and trees and flowers? Then if so, you said--how noble to be owner of this! To be able to survey it all and say--this is mine! But when you become a true Christian and open your heart to a Christian's faith, you can say--All this will not begin to compare with my Master's palace to which He will take me home after a few days. This, compared with that, is only as the merest dunghill! "In my Fathers' house are many mansions." Jesus said he was going to get them ready for us, and then would take us all home. They we shall indeed be "at home in the presence of Jesus." He can tell us ten thousand things that took place ages before we were born. If you believed that you were to be there, would it be strange if you were too happy to sleep tonight? How many times have I heard it said within a few months by one and another--I have been too happy in God to sleep! One of the most active business men of the city who had been skeptical was brought to see his sins and to be greatly concerned for himself. After attending meetings many evenings, he finally said to his wife--It does me no good to go to these meetings; I must stop. I am going out of town today. He went accordingly to meet the cars, but lo, they had gone! Upon his return his wife said--Now please go with me to the meeting once more. He consented; the truth took hold of his soul with power. She had been praying for him for many years; and now he is converted. What is the result? She is too happy to sleep and so is he! They have a thousand things to talk over, to recount the mercies of the Lord and to celebrate his love. There

was no sleep in that house for at least one night. And here was another most beautiful result; their two children are also converted, and they "rejoice, believing in God, with all their house."

The reason why people live as they do is that they lack faith. They fail to trust in God. They do not realize the great things of God's promises and of his love.

Finally, none can be happy even in heaven, without faith. Unless they can confide in God, it were vain to suppose they can be quiet and blessed even there. For, in that world, perhaps even more than in this, there will be things brought before their minds which they cannot understand. Under the government of an infinite God there must always be things done or permitted by the Great Ruler of all which minds so small and short-sighted as ours can by no means fathom. There is no alternative then but either to trust, or to rebel. Faith or sin--this is the only alternative. How wise, therefore, that God should train his children to faith before he ventures to take them up to heaven? And let them all take care that they do not even ask to go there, until they have faith enough to trust God as revealed here! It must be a fearful thing to go to heaven unprepared to endure its discipline. God will take none there, till He sees they can bear it.

God's Commandments Not Grievous

Lecture IX
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Text.--1 John 5:3: "His commandments are not grievous."

The commandments here spoken of are God's. The whole verse reads--"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." It is elsewhere said, we may know we love God because we love His children. Here the order is reversed;--"we know we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments." Both statements are true. If we truly and rightly love men we shall love God also; and if God, then we shall love His children too.

"Grievous," in our text means oppressive, heavy to be borne; yet not heavy in the physical, but in the moral, sense.

I. When a commandment may be said to be grievous.

II. When a commandment is not grievous.

III. I am next to consider in special the commandments of God, to see whether they can

rightly be deemed grievous.

IV. What God's law does require.

I. And here in the outset we must enquire when a commandment may be said to be grievous, and how we may know whether it is truly so regarded or not.

What are those qualities and relations which constitute a commandment really grievous? Have we any certain test, any sure means of knowing?

We have. God has given us a moral nature by which we may judge, and by which indeed we cannot but judge. Indeed, God requires us to judge by the decisions of this very nature, a requisition which assumes that His written word imposes no precepts on us inconsistent with the moral nature He has given us. It should not be overlooked that God has given us two volumes of revelation, the one written; the other implanted in our constitution. It is safe therefore to assume that the precepts of the one cannot be in conflict with the unquestionable decisions of the other.

Upon this principle, we know,

- 1. That a commandment, impossible to be fulfilled, must be pronounced grievous. We cannot help pronouncing it so, let who ever will affirm the contrary.
- 2. The same is true of a commandment that is unreasonable, one which our moral sense affirms to be so.

A commandment may be unreasonable in many respects; e.g. if it be manifestly unnecessary; the result of capricious severity. If we say this, we should say, that the command is unreasonable, and therefore grievous.

Supposing we know beyond question that the commandments are unnecessary, then if they require great things under great and solemn penalties, they are a great grievance; if under infinite penalties, then they are infinitely grievous; if under light penalties, then they are a light grievance. If the things required are not important, and yet are enforced by grave and fearful penalties, the commands are clearly grievous. Every sane mind necessarily affirms this to be the case.

- 3. A partial commandment is grievous. If it requires different things of persons under the same circumstances; if it has respect of persons, we condemn it as grievous.

Again, if it were difficult to be obeyed, even by the well disposed, and great penalties were attached to disobedience; if under the best circumstances and with the utmost facilities, obedience were scarcely possible, and failure almost certain, this would be grievous.

Again, if we were required to secure any given end and the requisite means were not

within our reach, and are not furnished us by the Power that makes the requisition; if we were required to make brick without straw, or to convert the world without the requisite agencies and powers, and the commands were enforced by heavy penalties, this must be regarded as greatly grievous.

- 4. Or, if the command were unadapted to our nature or opposed to our highest and best interests; or if the possibility of obeying it were precluded by our circumstances, or by our relations, and we are laid under the burden of heavy penalties to do these things, this would be truly grievous. We could not possibly regard it otherwise.
- 5. We should regard a commandment grievous if it required anything more than honest intention and best endeavor, inasmuch as whatever lies outside of and beyond this must be impossible to us. What we cannot do with the best intention and the utmost endeavor, we cannot do at all. This, therefore, would be grievous.
- 6. Or yet again, if the interests to be protected by law were of vast importance, and yet were protected by only a slight penalty, such a law might well be deemed grievous by those who had interests demanding protection. You would regard it as a most grievous law which should propose to protect your life by a penalty of only 37 1/2 cents.
- 7. Or if a trifling end were set up, but a fearful penalty were attached, this also would be grievous.

II. When a commandment is not grievous.

- 1. It is not grievous merely because it conflicts with our unreasonable desires. If the desires are contrary to reason, it is not unreasonable that laws should cross them.
- 2. Law is not grievous because opposed to the selfishness of men. A precept may be perfectly, infinitely opposed to selfishness, and yet be far from being grievous.
- 3. It is not grievous because of its being opposed to our self-will. A self-will that is arbitrary and capricious is no standard by which to judge of law.
- 4. Law is not grievous when it merely opposes what conscience also opposes. If law does not conflict with a good and sound conscience, all is right, for conscience is the reason judging on moral subjects--the faculty constituted of God for this end. If conscience be for it, therefore, it cannot be grievous.
- 5. No law is grievous which requires only that which is for our highest good. This, our reason necessarily affirms.
- 6. If the object of the precept is to secure our own highest good, it cannot be regarded by us as grievous, for its spirit is altogether good.

Now do not say that in these statements I am dogmatizing. I am only affirming

self-evident propositions. They need only a clear statement to appear to every mind self-evident.

- 7. If the law forbids nothing except what would be injurious to us, it is all right.
- 8. If it requires us to deny ourselves for the good of others, all is right, provided this self-denial will be for our own highest good. If it will be greater good to us than the sacrifice is an evil; if the self-denial, though real and great, gives us back more than an equivalent, the law which requires it is by no means grievous. Especially is this true if the self-denial not only gives us a greater good, but is an essential and only means of securing our highest good. By no means can this be deemed grievous, requiring of us a self-denial, of which the more we exercise, the greater good we secure.
- 9. A law is not grievous where it requires of us simple honesty--a regard to the rights of others, equal to our regard for our own. This cannot be grievous. This may be honest and right if it requires no more of us than we require of others conscientiously. Who can pronounce such a commandment to be grievous?

I shall proceed by and by to enquire whether God's commandments have these qualities and this character; but at present, I am discussing the subject only in its general and abstract form. So doing, we may perhaps better establish the principles that underlie the subject.

- 10. A command cannot be said to be grievous when it requires of us only the reasonable employment of all we have and are. For so much is reasonable, no matter what the particular service may be under the circumstances. It were a contradiction to say it is unreasonable to require a reasonable service of active powers, made for useful action, or of means of usefulness, put in our hands by our Creator.
- 11. That cannot be unreasonable or grievous which simply requires of us a right voluntary state. We know ourselves to have a free will, the power to originate our own volitions. This is a thing of which we are absolutely certain from our consciousness. We do not certainly know that we can move our own muscles. The law of connection between the will and the muscles is sometimes suspended. You might find it to be so in any effort you might make. But you know you can control your own will. You may try this at any time; and you will find it so. You also believe and assume it to be so, of everybody else, of sane and sound mind.
- 12. Now, therefore, if God's love requires of you only a right state of your will, and those acts and states which follow naturally from a right state of the will, no man can reasonably feel that this is grievous, or can honestly pronounce it to be so.
- 13. A commandment is not grievous when it requires nothing capricious, nothing unnecessary, nothing hard to the well-disposed; and threatens disobedience with only the proper penalties.

Again, it cannot be deemed grievous when we could not be satisfied if it required nothing less than it does; when we ourselves, in all honesty, are constrained to say, it is all right;

but if anything less were required, or if its requisitions were enforced by a less penalty, we should say--it is wrong. Especially if we are aware that any other course than that indicated in the precept would be hard or even ruinous--hard in the sense in which sin is hard, and ruinous in the sense in which sin is ruinous.

Again, if it requires us to do nothing for which help is not provided--all the help requisite in the case--this is not grievous. If it tenders to us all the appropriate instrumentalities necessary to make us practically obedient, we cannot regard it as grievous.

Nor again, when it is easily understood by the well disposed. If the law were above our reach, as the ancient king nailed his on a pillar too high to read,--you might complain; but since the law is made so plain that he who runs may read it, you cannot regard it as grievous. Especially you cannot so regard it, since the will is taken for the deed, and it is always accepted if there be a winning mind and a good intention. e.g. Suppose the command be to convert the world. You set yourself to do it. You live for this purpose. You honestly intend to do all you can for this end. You fail only because, having exhausted your powers, the work has proved too great for your strength. Very well; you shall have your reward, as if you had succeeded and done all. What! say you, is the will taken for the deed? Yes; when the whole heart is in it and you do your utmost. Ah, said that missionary, as he returned with ruined health and blighted hopes, "I have failed! My mission purpose and endeavors have been a failure!" Perhaps not. You have been to Africa, and are driven back by the climate. Very well, you have obeyed the command and you shall not fail of your reward.

III. I am next to consider in special the commandments of God, to see whether they can rightly be deemed grievous.

Negatively, as to what they are not and do not require.

- 1. Not one of them requires anything above the use of our own powers, and nothing which goes beyond the dictates and approval of our own reason. The precepts of the law and of the gospel are identical in spirit and in general character, neither requiring of us anything more than we can do, nor anything not in harmony with our reason.
- 2. God's law does not require us to undo anything we have done that is wrong--in the season of putting it back to its position before being done. This might be, and usually would be, impossible. God only requires us to undo our present wrong purposes and states of mind; the wrong deeds of the past. He has provided a way to forgive; the present wrong of our heart He makes our concern.
- 3. He does not require us to make satisfaction for the wrong done, either by atonement, or by making up for the wrong we have done.
- 4. He does not require us to save ourselves and secure the salvation of our own souls, without His aid and grace. He neither requires or expects that we shall save anybody else by our own wisdom or efforts. He knows this is naturally impossible.

- 5. He does not ask us to work out a legal righteousness for the future. He does not make perfect obedience to law the condition of our salvation. This, if required, would be grievous, inasmuch as we have entirely broken the law and forfeited all hope in that direction.
- 6. Nor does He require us to fulfil the law in the future without reference to His grace, and without His aid, presented in the gospel. Nor does He demand that we shall bear our own burdens, overcome our temptations, and fight our spiritual battles--without His grace, guidance and strength. He does not expect us to be our own guide, to find our own way, and to create our own success.

Again, God requires nothing that will in the least mar our own happiness, or interfere with our true interests. Nothing inconsistent with our highest progress in true improvement; nothing that naturally retards our rapid advancement in all that is good.

- 7. He does not require us to love Him above our ability.

The law specifies--"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength." With whose mind--and whose strength? Only thine own. And with how much of this mind and strength? Only with all. Nothing more. It were simply absurd to say that this is impossible; and therefore it is impious to think or speak of it as grievous.

- 8. The law does not require us to regard and treat our Heavenly Father in any respect better than He deserves to be treated, and never better than we know He deserves, or than we affirm that we ought to treat Him. When we can honestly and conscientiously be satisfied with ourselves as to our treatment of God, He will be satisfied. No one shall ever be able, honestly, to say--"I think Thou requirest me to obey to love Thee more than Thou deservest to be obeyed and loved." There is nothing in either law or gospel which requires anything beyond the legitimate demands of our own reason. Nay more; the law appeals to him in its own vindication and makes his own conscience the rule. God appeals to every moral agent to judge for himself what is right. "Are not My ways equal, says He; are not your ways unequal?" "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God?" So throughout the Scripture God makes His appeal to man's own mind to judge for himself of the rectitude of the law imposed on him and of the equity of the threatened penalty. Who then should say that the spirit of His government is overbearing, capricious, unreasonable? Who can regard His commandments grievous?

Again, God never requires His interests to be estimated above their real value. Yet some think God to be very selfish, in requiring everybody to love Him. But what less could He require? God does not ask you to love Him more than He deserves to be loved; nor more than it is right you should love Him. This love which God requires of you towards Himself is good-willing, and it has intrinsically for its object the happiness of sentient beings, and should be in proportion to the amount of being, so to speak, which each individual may have; or (which amounts to the same result) to the amount of happiness each is capable of enjoying. Now God's capacity for happiness is infinite and therefore is

an end of infinite value and rightly claims the utmost good-willing of all created beings. When God asks you to love Him supremely, He only asks you to love Him in proportion to the importance of the object--on His own happiness. If His interests are supreme, why not accord to them your supreme regard?

- 9. But He requires of you also the love of complacency; a delight in His character as good. He asks that this should be supreme, and why should He not? Is He not infinitely worthy of your complacency and regard?
- 10. Yet further; God never requires us to regard any interest not known, or which we are not capable of knowing; nor does He ask us to regard any interest beyond its perceived or perceivable value. Thus universally, God measures His demands by our powers of obedience, love and service. He never requires us to do things we cannot reach and grasp; never, to treat Him with any more confidence than He deserves, nor to love Him when He is unworthy of our love, or at all beyond His worthiness.
- 11. God's requisitions upon us never go beyond our honest convictions of what they should be. He does not require things, the propriety of which is to our own minds questionable. He is never despotic, never tyrannical. His intelligent creatures are always under the conviction that God's will ought to be obeyed and ought to be the universal law. He requires of no creature of His in any world more obedience or love than His own intelligence sees and affirms to be right.
- 12. No one can rightly ask of us any more or other feelings than those which naturally result from right intentions and a right state of the will. The feelings, it should be considered, are involuntary and therefore are not directly controlled by the will; yet they are so related to the will that certain feelings naturally follow a right state of the will and certain other feelings, a wrong state. Hence moral responsibility truly attaches to the state of the will; and it is on this principle that God acts, declaring that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted."
- 13. In accordance with this, God never requires any other action or course of life except what naturally flows from right intention. Hence He lays His requisitions on the will or heart, requiring only that this be right and thus virtually requiring its natural results and out-flowings.

IV. What God's law does require.

- 1. An equitable state of mind; one that regards every known interest according to our judgment of its value. God requires us to regard the universal good of each being according to its perceived value. This is an equitable and right state of mind. It is a voluntary and a simple state of mind, a mere unit. Instead of being embarrassed with points of casuistry, it comes to you asking only that you give your heart to God and merge your will in homage to His because His is infinite reason. It simply requires you to regard all interests according to their perceived value. If your neighbors interests are equal to your own, regard them so; if less, regard them less; if greater, regard them more. God never requires any being to sacrifice his own interest for a less valuable interest of another. Hence, when He requires of us universal benevolence, this does not demand that we love others and not ourselves--God and not ourselves; but only each, according to its value. Hence this law never drops from regard our own interest, but most

effectually secures it.

- 2. This Christian, virtuous, life, is the natural and certain result of the state of mind which drops selfishness, and puts self and all other interests in their proper places. You have only to maintain that state of mind and abide in it; then your acts and state will meet the entire demands of the law.
- 3. Let us now look into the gospel. This requires the same as the law, and something more. It comes, in most inviting and impressive form, to win us back to the love and obedience which the law enjoins. Its special requisition for this end is that we receive the Holy Ghost as the condition and means of practical obedience and a practical realization of the great result of holiness in heart and life. Man needs such an influence; therefore God provides it. Whatever else did or did not occur at the fall of man in Eden, it is plain that the Holy Ghost was grieved. Man tore himself away from his God and from communion with Him, so that God no longer dwelt within him. But now God is seeking to restore that state of communion and fellowship. He now returns to man in the person of His Spirit, and asks of the sinner to open his heart and make this Heaven agent welcome.
- 4. I need not here speak of the case of those who know not the gospel, only to say that all such are plainly under the law only, and not under the gospel. They have the work of the law written in their heart; and by this light they stand or fall. But of us, who have the gospel, God requires that we should receive the Holy Ghost. Some will say--is not this unreasonable? No; for the Holy Ghost is not far away in some remote quarter of the universe where you cannot reach Him, but is present, and needs only be made welcome and He will take up His abode with you. He comes in connection with His word, to teach, enforce and impress it; and the thing for you to do is to yield yourself to the conviction of the truth, thus revealed. To yield to truth, is to yield to God. When the Bible shows you that you ought to believe and trust God, then to do this is to yield to the Spirit of God and to welcome His presence to your heart. When you know that you ought to give up your sins, then to yield to this conviction is to consent to the claims of His Spirit and to receive it to your soul. Else you resist the Holy Ghost. He does not expect you to rise of yourself and without His aid from the state of death in which you are plunged, but requires you to receive the Holy Ghost, and continually, to yield to every conviction of duty. By presentation of the truth, He draws; you are to yield; He constrains; you acquiesce. He requires you to be led and filled with the Spirit; to lean on Him and to avail yourself of His help. He bids you obey His perfect law; and by this divine agency, offered through the Spirit, He provides all requisite aid and strength for this purpose. This provision is both full and free. If it were otherwise, you might find or feel it hard to be required to be filled with the Holy Ghost. If you must needs ascend into heaven to bring Him down, or descend into the deep to bring Him up, this might be grievous. But only to receive a present and offered Spirit; how can you think this hard? Jesus comes to restore and reinstate you in holiness and love; does He require you to do all this unaided? He neither expects nor requires it. He tenders to you His advocacy; proposes to advocate your cause without cost. Are you rich? Give to your suffering fellow men and please God therein; Are you poor? He requires of you only according to what you have.
- 5. He does not require you to live an anxious distracted life, bearing all your own burdens

alone, but has permitted you to be "without carefulness," casting all your care upon Him. He gives you the fullest permission to let the peace of God rule in your heart; and is this a hard thing? Is this state of mind a hard and grievous one? Jesus said--"My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The men of the world give sparingly, grudgingly; they give today and take back tomorrow; but not so does Christ give to His friends. Is this grievous?

- 6. He says--"Rejoice always." Many seem to think religion only fit for sick-beds and funeral occasions, and they say, "What have we to do with a religion so gloomy? Must we forego all our enjoyments? How grievous that would be!" The "righteous should make their boast in Him and be glad." In His salvation, let them "exceedingly rejoice." God invites them to look up to Him hopefully, never desponding, much less despairing. If He had required you to rejoice in worldly pleasure and be happy in the good things of earth, this were indeed a hard saying and a grievous commandment.
- 7. But I have heard some of you say--"God wants nothing to do with me; He has utterly cast me off; How then can I believe and trust in Him? I have abused Him too long." Mark; God asks of you no such feelings, no such thoughts. On the contrary He only asks you to take Him at His word and welcome to your soul a full salvation. He gives you the full consolation of believing. Is this grievous?
- 8. He requires you to embrace every dispensation with a kiss; to believe that all things shall work together for your good; and so believing, to rejoice in all your afflictions and tribulations.
- 9. Of you, sinner, He requires that you should come today and bring all your load of guilt to Him. Come, however deeply conscious of much past sin; come and hold your soul under the flowing stream of His redeeming blood. And is this hard? Is this too bad? Is it too bad that He should forgive so freely and tender you the waters of life without money or price? He does not require you to hear a great many sermons or make a great many impenitent prayers.

But you say--"Lord, if I were a Christian, I would come at once to Thee; but now, I must certainly make myself better before I come." "No," says your Savior; "come now. Make no delay; offer no excuses for refusal." "Can I come, you say, without His help?" Is He not helping you even now? Suppose I should sit sullenly down and refuse to move, when everything is ready and nothing wanting but the action of my own will? Suppose I should then plead that I lacked the power and that I must wait! What nonsense!

Now He offers you His hand and asks you to take hold of it with your own. There must be a reciprocal taking hold of hands, the Spirit's agency working together with your own. The hand of your faith must take hold of the hand let down from heaven to you. And is this hard or grievous?

REMARKS.

1. What could God have required less than He does? Nothing. What could He have required which would be more easy? I appeal to every sinner in this house; can you think of anything more easy, more feasible, more available? Of course you cannot think of His saving you in your sins. This would

be no salvation. Do you complain that Christ's commands are grievous? In what one particular could He have done better?

2. You know that Christ has always done as much as He could for your salvation. Can you suggest a better, or more available system? Can you devise anything better than for you to take hold of His strength? He gives you the entire influence of His example, the utmost virtue of His blood and of His dying love; can you think of anything more favorable?

Let me ask these young women, can you think of anything better? Has He made salvation less easy than He might? Did you ever tell Him so? Do you say--"Why did He not over-rule my freedom?" If He had, He could not have saved you any how. Could He have done anything more that would have been of service towards your salvation? Has He refused to make any sacrifices that if made, would have done you good? Did He avoid the cross? Did He shun the shame? Did He stay in heaven and bask in its bliss? Oh No! He came down; He flew to your relief; although He saw how many groans and how much blood it would cost Him.

Have you thought of any expression of love which He has not made? Of any words of tenderness and forbearance He should have uttered, but did not? Have you acquainted yourself with what He has said? Is it said guardedly? Is the fulfillment uncertain? What is wanting?

How wicked of you if you complain! What have you to complain of? He has done the best He could; and have you any right to complain of that? How wicked to regard and treat His service and His gospel as if it were a hard thing!

A young woman said to me, "I am trying to become a Christian." What does that mean? Real honest trying implies the full consent of the will, and that is all that God requires. This consent is, being converted. People commonly deceive themselves when they talk thus about trying.

3. How great a mistake, to suppose that we cannot obey God. If our circumstances and nature were such that we absolutely could not obey Him, it would indeed be very grievous for Him to require it. But how can it be difficult now, since the thing He requires is only right willing? To say that a moral agent tries to will right and yet cannot is a downright absurdity. Nobody ever tried to will right and found it hard. This would be a contradiction in terms.

4. Inasmuch as the Spirit of God is freely given to us, it must be easy and not hard for us to get it. The command therefore to "be filled with the Spirit" is by no means grievous.

5. Only those complain of its being difficult to obey the law who would fain do it without accepting the help offered in the gospel. With the heart all wrong, they try to render an external obedience. This is always a hard up-hill business.

6. Without being at all aware of it many are trying to get along without Christ. Their effort is to make themselves good enough by dint of resolutions and efforts of their own, made quite in their own strength. Such persons, of course, will find it hard to be religious.

7. In a little different mode, some try to get grace by works of love. They want to come to Christ, but in order to get Christ, they try to work up a certain state of feeling and perform some legal works. All this is quite aside from the simplicity of gospel faith.

In like manner many try to get the Spirit without yielding to His present teachings. Overlooking and disobeying these, they wait for more light and pray for more of the Holy Spirit, while they refuse to obey what they have.

In fact, such persons fail to use a present offered Savior; do not realize how near, and how free, and how rich, are His gifts, nor how truly they are available--that they may as truly have and use the strength of Christ as they can use the strength of their own muscles. You may hear them crying and shouting aloud for the Holy Ghost, as if He were as far off as the fixed stars, not aware that He is really within them, trying to bring them to take hold of His present help. Such people make religion a hard and grievous matter. They do not understand its great simplicity and its ineffable richness and adaptation to human want.

8. Those who refuse to take Christ at His word will find it hard to get religion. You will hear them saying--

"Reason I hear, her counsels weigh,

And all I hear I approve;

but still I find it hard t'obey,

And harder still to love."

Is that your experience? If so, then you do not believe one word of Christ's promises. You have failed to reach the simplicity of gospel faith. While Christ is trying by every means to woo and to wed your heart to Himself, and lets down an almighty arm to rescue and save you, what reception does He meet with! Each Sabbath evening in this place, we meet persons who think it one of the hardest things in the world to become Christians; who say--"I am trying to find Christ, but I must conclude He is not to be found. I cannot come to Him." Are not all these conceptions of Christ unkind to Him? Are they not false, injurious to Christ?

9. The great mass of professors of religion take ground directly opposed to our text. Whereas the inspired word declares--"His commandments are not grievous," they represent God's service as very hard and full of grief. Reason; they are in legal bondage, and have never broken out into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Let me ask these sinners, have you not received the impression from what you have heard Christians say, that it is a very difficult thing to get religion and that its service is so hard and God's law so high, it requires an angel's heart to keep it? Whereas the truth is, God requires nothing in anywise unreasonable. It is easier to be well-disposed than ill-disposed. How then can you say, it is easier to rebel than to obey? O sinner, all such notions are utterly false. His commandments are not grievous.

Look at that young man who says--"If I become a Christian I shall be compelled to preach the gospel,

and O, what dull work and poor pay!" Does he forget that they who "turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever?" Is this too hard?

But he says--"I must be a missionary and go to Africa; be sick there and die an early death." Well; "he that will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it."

"But I am not eloquent." Oh, not eloquent! Can you not stammer out the gospel story? If it were really in your heart filling all your soul with its rich experience, could you not give some utterance to its glorious yet simple message? Beware of ambition! If you could be the first preacher in all the land--the most eloquent and the most applauded, that would do! Oh, that unholy ambition! You make your religion insufferably hard if you try to serve both God and your own ambition!

The Wages of Sin

Lecture X

July 5, 1854

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Text.--Rom. 6:23: "The wages of sin is death."

The death here spoken of is that which is due as the penal sanction of God's law.

In presenting the subject of our text, I must,

I. Illustrate the nature of sin;

II. Specify some of the attributes of the penal sanctions of God's law;

III. Show what this penalty must be.

I. An illustration will give us the best practical view of the nature of sin.

- 1. You have only to suppose a government established to secure the highest well-being of the governed, and of the ruling authorities also. Supposed the head of this government to embark all his attributes in the enterprise--all his wealth, all his time, all his energies--to compass the high end of the highest general good. For this purpose, he enacts the best possible laws--laws which, if obeyed, will secure the highest good of both subject and Prince. He then takes care to affix adequate penalties; else all his care and wisdom must come to naught. He devotes to the

interests of his government all he is and all he has, without reserve or abatement.

But some of his subjects refuse to sympathize with this movement. They say, "charity begins at home," and they are for taking care of themselves in the first place. In short they are thoroughly selfish.

- 2. It is easy to see what this would be in a human government. The man who does this becomes the common enemy of the government and of all its subjects. This is sin. This illustrates precisely the case of the sinner. Sin is selfishness. It sets up a selfish end, and to gain it, uses selfish means; so that in respect to both its end and its means, it is precisely opposed to God and to all the ends of general happiness which He seeks to secure. It denies God's rights; discards God's interests. Each sinner maintains that his own will shall be the law. The interest he sets himself to secure is entirely opposed to that proposed by God in his government.
- 3. All law must have sanctions. Without sanctions, it would be only advice. It is therefore essential to the distinctive and inherent nature of law that it have sanctions.

These are either remuneratory, or vindicatory. They promise reward for obedience, and they also threaten penalty for disobedience. They are vindicatory, inasmuch as they vindicate the honour of the violated law.

Again, sanctions may be either natural or governmental. Often both forms exist in other governments than the divine.

- 4. Natural penalties are those evil consequences which naturally result without any direct interference of government to punish. Thus in all governments, the disrespect of its friends falls as a natural penalty on transgressors. They are the natural enemies of all good subjects.

In the divine government, compunctions of conscience and remorse fall into this class, and indeed many other things which naturally result to obedience on the one hand and to disobedience on the other.

- 5. There should also be governmental sanctions. Every governor should manifest his displeasure against the violation of his laws. To leave the whole question of obedience to mere natural consequences is obviously unjust to society. Inasmuch as governments are established to sustain law and secure obedience, they are bound to put forth their utmost energies in this work.
- 6. Another incidental agency of government under some circumstances is that which we call discipline. One object of discipline is to go before the infliction of penalty and force open unwilling eyes, to see that law has a government to back it up and the sinner a fearful penalty to fear. Coming upon men during their probation, while as yet they have not seen or felt the fearfulness of penalty, it is designed to admonish them--to make them think and consider. Thus its special object is the good of the subject on whom it falls and of those who may witness its administration. It does not propose to sustain the dignity of law by exemplary inflictions. This belongs exclusively to the province of penalty. Discipline, therefore, is not penal in the sense of visiting crime with deserved punishment, but aims to dissuade the subject of law from violating

its precepts.

- 7. Disciplinary agency could scarcely exist under a government of pure law, for the reason that such a government cannot defer the infliction of penalty. Discipline presupposes a state of suspended penalty. Hence penal inflictions must be broadly distinguished from disciplinary.

We are sinners, and therefore have little occasion to dwell on the remuneratory features of God's government. We can have no claim to remuneration under law, being precluded utterly by our sin. But with the penal features we have everything to do. I therefore proceed to enquire,

II. What are the attributes of the penal sanctions of God's law?

- 1. God has given us reason. This affirms intuitively and irresistibly all the great truths of moral government. There are certain attributes which we know must belong to the moral law, e.g. one is, intrinsic justice. Penalty should threaten no more and no less than is just.-- Justice must be an attribute of God's law; else the whole universe must inevitably condemn it.

Intrinsic justice means and implies that the penalty be equal to the obligation violated. The guilt of sin consists in its being a violation of obligation. Hence the guilt must be in proportion to the magnitude of the obligation violated, and consequently the penalty must be measured by this obligation.

- 2. Governmental justice is another attribute. This feature of law seeks to afford security against transgression. Law is not governmentally just unless its penalty be so graduated as to afford the highest security against sin which the nature of the case admits. Suppose under any government the sanctions of law are trifling, not at all proportioned to the end to be secured. Such a government is unjust to itself, and to the interests it is committed to maintain. Hence a good government must be governmentally just, affording in the severity of its penalties and the certainty of their just infliction, the highest security that its law shall be obeyed.

Again, penal sanctions should be worthy of the end aimed at by the law and by its author. Government is only a means to an end,--this proposed end being universal obedience and its consequent happiness. If law is indispensable for obtaining this end, its penalty should be graduated accordingly.

- 3. Hence the penalty should be graduated by the importance of the precept. If the precept be of fundamental importance--of such importance that disobedience to it saps the very existence of all government--then it should be guarded by the greatest and most solemn sanctions. The penalties attached to its violation should be of the highest order.
- 4. Penalty should make an adequate expression of the law giver's views of the value of the end he proposes to secure by law; also of his views of the sacredness of his law; also of the intrinsic guilt of disobedience. Penalty aims to bring forth the heart of the lawgiver--to show the earnestness of his desire to maintain the right, and to secure that order and well-being which depend on obedience. In the greatness of the penalty the lawgiver brings forth his heart and pours the whole influence of his character upon his subjects.

The object of executing penalty is precisely the same; not to gratify revenge, as some seem to suppose, but to act on the subjects of government with influences toward obedience. It has the same general object as the law itself has.

- 5. Penal sanctions should be an adequate expression of the lawgiver's regard for the public good and of his interest in it. In the precept he gave some expression; in the penalty, he gives yet more. In the precept we see the object in view and have a manifestation of regard for the public interests; in the penalty, we have a measure of this regard, showing us how great it is. E.g. suppose a human law were to punish murder with only a trifling penalty. Under the pretense of being very tender-hearted, the lawgiver amerces this crime of murder with a fine of fifty cents! Would this show that he greatly loved his subjects and highly valued their life and interests? Far from it. You cannot feel that a legislator has done his duty unless he shows how much he values human life, and unless he attaches a penalty commensurate in some good degree with the end to be secured.

One word as to the infliction of capital punishment in human governments. There is a difference of opinion as to which is most effective, solitary punishment for life, or death. Leaving this question without remark, I have it to say that no man ever doubted that the murderer deserves to die. If some other punishment than death is to be preferred, it is not by any means because the murderer does not deserve death. No man can doubt this for a moment. It is one of the unalterable principles of righteousness, that if a man sacrifices the interest of another, he sacrifices his own; an eye for an eye; life for life.

We cannot but affirm that no government lays sufficient stress on the protection of human life unless it guards this trust with its highest penalties. Where life and all its vital interests are at stake, there the penalty should be great and solemn as is possible.

- 6. Moral agents have two sides to their sensibility; hope and fear;--to which you may address the prospect of good and the dread of evil. I am now speaking of penalty. This is addressed only to fear.
- 7. I have said in substance that penalty should adequately assert and vindicate the rightful authority of the lawgiver; should afford if possible an adequate rebuke of sin and should be based on a just appreciation of its nature. God's moral government embraces the whole intelligent universe, and stretches with its vast results onward through eternity. Hence the sweep and breadth of its interests are absolutely unlimited, and consequently the penalties of its law, being set to vindicate the authority of this government and to sustain these immeasurable interests, should be beyond measure dreadful. If anything beyond and more dreadful than the threatened penalty could be conceived, all minds would say-- "This is not enough." With any just views of the relations and the guilt of sin, they could not be satisfied unless the penalty is the greatest that is conceivable. Sin is so vile, so mischievous, so terribly destructive and so far-sweeping in its ruin, moral agents could not feel that enough is done so long as more can be.

III. What is the penalty of God's moral law?

- 1. Our text answers, "death." This certainly is not animal death, for saints die and animals also,

neither of whom can be receiving the wages of sin. Besides, this would be no penalty if, after its infliction, men went at once to heaven. Such a penalty, considered as the wages of sin, would only be an insult to God's government.

- 2. Again, it cannot be spiritual death, for this is nothing else than a state of entire disobedience to the law. You cannot well conceive anything more absurd than to punish a man for disobedience by subjecting him to perpetual disobedience--an effort to sustain the law by dooming such offenders to its perpetual violation--and nothing more.
- 3. But this death is endless misery, corresponding to the death-penalty in human governments. Every body knows what this is. It separates the criminal from society forever; debars him at once and utterly from all the privileges of the government, and consigns him over to hopeless ruin. Nothing more dreadful can be inflicted. It is the extreme penalty, fearful beyond any other that is possible for man to inflict.
- 4. There can be no doubt that death as spoken of in our text is intended to correspond to the death-penalty in human governments.
- 5. You will also observe that in our text the "gift of God" which is "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," is directly contrasted with death, the wages of sin. This fact may throw light on the question respecting the nature of this death. We must look for the antithesis of "eternal life."

Now this eternal life is not merely an eternal existence. Eternal life never means merely an eternal existence, in any case where it is used in scripture; but it does mean a state of eternal blessedness, implying eternal holiness as its foundation. The use of the term "life" in scripture in the sense of real life--a life worth living--i.e. real and rich enjoyment, is so common as to supersede the necessity of special proof.

The penalty of death is therefore the opposite of this--viz., eternal misery.

I must here say a few words upon the objections raised against this doctrine of eternal punishment.

All the objections I have ever heard amount only to this, that it is unjust. They may be expressed in somewhat various phraseology, but this is the only idea which they involve, of any moment at all.

- (1.) It is claimed to be unjust because "life is so short."

How strangely men talk! Life so short, men have not time to sin enough to deserve eternal death! Do men forget that one sin incurs the penalty due for sinning? How many sins ought it to take to make one transgression of the law of God? Men often talk as if they supposed it must require a great many. As if a man must commit a great many murders before he has made up the crime of murder enough to fall under the sentence of the court! What! shall a

man come before the court and plead that although he has broken the law to be sure, yet he has not lived long enough, and has not broken the law times enough to incur its penalty? What court on earth ever recognized such a plea as proving any other than the folly and guilt of him who made it?

- o (2.) It is also urged that "man is so small, so very insignificant a being that he cannot possibly commit an infinite sin." What does this objection mean? Does it mean that sin is an act of creation, and to be measured therefore by the magnitude of that something which it creates? This would be an exceedingly wild idea of the nature of sin. Does the objection mean that man cannot violate an obligation of infinite strength? Then his meaning is simply false, as every body must know. Does he imply that the guilt of sin is not to be measured by the obligation violated? Then he knows not what he says, or wickedly denies known truth. What! man so little that he cannot commit much sin! Is this the way we reason in analogous cases? Suppose your child disobeys you. He is very much smaller than you are! But do you therefore exonerate him from blame? Is this a reason which nullifies his guilt? Can no sin be committed by inferiors against their superior? Have sensible men always been mistaken in supposing that the younger and smaller are sometimes under obligations to obey the older and the greater? Suppose you smite down the magistrate; suppose you insult, or attempt to assassinate the king; is this a very small crime almost too excusable to be deemed a crime at all, because forsooth, you are in a lower position and he in a higher? You say, "I am so little, so very insignificant! How can I deserve so great a punishment?" Do you reason so in any other case except your own sins against God? Never.
- o (3.) Again, some men say, "Sin is not an infinite evil." This language is ambiguous. Does it mean that sin would not work infinite mischief if suffered to run on indefinitely? This is false, for if only one soul were ruined by it, the mischief accruing from it would be infinite. Does it mean that sin is not an infinite evil, as seen in its present results and relations? Suppose this admitted; it proves nothing to our purpose, for it may be true that the sum total of evil results from each single sin will not all be brought out in any duration less than eternity. How then can you measure the evil of sin by what you see to day?

But there are still other considerations to show that the penalty of the law must be infinite. Sin is an infinite natural evil. It is so in this sense, that there are no bounds to the natural evil it would introduce if not governmentally restrained.

If sin were to ruin but one soul, there could be no limit set to the evil it would thus occasion.

Again, sin involves infinite guilt, for it is a violation of infinite obligation. Here it is important to notice a common mistake, growing out of confusion of ideas about the ground of obligation. From this, result mistakes in regard to what constitutes the guilt of sin. Here I might show that when you misapprehend the ground of obligation, you will almost of necessity

misconceive the nature and extent of sin and guilt. Let us recur to our former illustration. Here is a government, wisely framed to secure the highest good of the governed and of all concerned. Whence arises the obligation to obey? Certainly from the intrinsic value of the end sought to be secured. But how broad is this obligation to obey; or in other words, what is its true measure? I answer, it exactly equals the value of the end which the government seeks to secure, and which obedience will secure, but which sin will destroy. By this measure of God the penalty must be graduated. By this the lawgiver must determine how much sanction, remuneratory and vindicatory, he must attach to his law in order to meet the demands of justice and benevolence.

- 6. Now God's law aims to secure the highest universal good. Its chief and ultimate end is not, strictly speaking, to secure supreme homage to God, but rather to secure the highest good of all intelligent moral beings--God, and all his creatures. So viewed, you will see that the intrinsic value of the end to be sought is the real ground of obligation to obey the precept. The value of this end being estimated, you have the value and strength of the obligation.

This is plainly infinite in the sense of being unlimited. In this sense we affirm obligation to be without limit. The very reason why we affirm any obligation at all is that the law is good and is the necessary means of the highest good of the universe. Hence the reason why we affirm any penalty at all compels us to affirm the justice and necessity of an infinite penalty. We see that intrinsic justice must demand an infinite penalty for the same reason that it demands any penalty whatever. If any penalty be just, it is just because law secures a certain good. If this good aimed at by the law be unlimited in extent, so must be the penalty. Governmental justice thus requires endless punishment; else it provides no sufficient guaranty for the public good.

Again, the law not only designs but tends to secure infinite good. Its tendencies are direct to this end.-- Hence its penalty should be infinite. The law is not just to the interests it both aims and tends to secure unless it arms itself with infinite sanctions.

- 7. Nothing less than infinite penalty can be an adequate expression of God's view of the value of the great end on which his heart is set. When men talk about eternal death being too great a penalty for sin, what do they think of God's efforts to restrain sin all over the moral universe? What do they think of the death of his well-beloved Son? Do they suppose it possible that God could give an adequate, or a corresponding expression to his hatred of sin by any penalty less than endless?
- 8. Nothing less could give an adequate expression to his regard for the authority of law. O, how fearful the results and how shocking the very idea, if God should fail to make an adequate expression of his regard for the sacredness of that law which underlies the entire weal of all his vast kingdom?

You would insist that He shall regard the violation of his law as Universalists do. How surely He would bring down an avalanche of ruin on all his intelligent creatures if He were to yield to your demands! Were he to affix anything less than endless penalty to his

law, what holy being could trust the administration of his government!

- 9. His regard to the public good forbids his attaching a light or finite penalty to his law. He loves his subjects too well. Some people have strange notions of the way in which a ruler should express his regard for his subjects. They would have him so tender-hearted toward the guilty that they should absorb his entire sympathy and regard. They would allow him perhaps to fix a penalty of sixpence fine for the crime of murder, but not much if anything more. The poor murderer's wife and children are so precious you must not take away much of his money, and as to touching his liberty or his life--neither of these is to be thought of. What! do you not know that human nature is very frail and temptable, and therefore you ought to deal very sparingly with penalties for murder? Perhaps they would say, you may punish the murderer by keeping him awake one night--just one, no more; and God may let a guilty man's conscience disturb him about to this extent for the crime of murder! The Universalists do tell us that they will allow the most High God to give a man conscience that shall trouble him a little if he commits murder--a little, say for the first and perhaps the second offence; but they are not wont to notice the fact that under this penalty of a troubling conscience, the more a man sins, the less he has to suffer. Under the operation of this descending scale, it will soon come to this that a murderer would not get so much penalty as the loss of one night's sleep. But such are the notions that men reach when they swing clear of the affirmations of an upright reason and of God's revealing Word.
- 10. Speaking now to those who have a moral sense to affirm the right as well as eyes to see the operation of law, I know you cannot deny the logical necessity of the death-penalty for the moral law of God. There is a logical clinch to every one of these propositions which you cannot escape.
- 11. No penalty less than infinite and endless can be an adequate expression of God's displeasure against sin and of his determination to resist and punish it. The penalty should run on as long as there are subjects to be affected by it--as long as there is need of any demonstration of God's feelings and governmental course toward sin.
- 12. Nothing less is the greatest God can inflict, for He certainly can inflict an endless and infinite punishment. If therefore the exigency demands the greatest penalty He can inflict, this must be the penalty--banishment from God and endless death.

But I must pass to remark that the gospel everywhere assumes the same. It holds that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified before God. Indeed, it not only affirms this, but builds its entire system of atonement and grace upon this foundation. It constantly assumes that there is no such thing as paying the debt and canceling obligation; and therefore that the sinner's only relief is forgiveness through redeeming blood.

Yet again, if the penalty be not endless death, what is it? Is it temporary suffering? Then how long does it last? When does it end? Has any sinner ever got through; served out his time and been taken to heaven? We have no testimony to prove such a case, not the first one; but we have the solemn testimony of Jesus Christ to prove that there never can be such a case. He tells us that there can be no passing from hell to heaven or from heaven to hell. A great gulf is fixed between, over which none shall ever pass. You may pass from

earth to heaven, or from earth to hell; but these two states of the future world are wide extremes, and no man or angel shall pass the gulf that divides them.

- 13. But you answer my question--What is the penalty? by the reply--It is only the natural consequences of sin as developed in a troubled conscience. Then it follows that the more a man sins the less he is punished, until it amounts to an infinitesimal quantity of punishment, for which the sinner cares just nothing at all. Who can believe this? Under this system, if a man fears punishment, he has only to pitch into sinning with the more will and energy; he will have the comfort of feeling that he can very soon get over all his compunctions, and get beyond any penalty whatever! And do you believe this is God's only punishment for sin? You cannot believe it.
- 14. Universalists always confound discipline with penal sanctions. They overlook this fundamental distinction and regard all that men suffer here in this world as only penal. Whereas it is scarcely penal at all, but is chiefly disciplinary. They ask--what good will it do a sinner to send him to an endless hell? Is not God perfectly benevolent, and if so, how can He have any other object than to do the sinner all the good he can?

I reply, punishment is not designed to do good to that sinner who is punished. It looks to other, remoter, and far greater good. Discipline, while he was on earth, sought mainly his personal good; penalty looks to other results. If you ask, Does not God aim to do good to the universal public by penalty? I answer, even so; that is precisely what he aims to do.

- 15. Under human governments, the penalty may aim in part to reclaim. So far, it is discipline. But the death-penalty--after all suspension is past and the fatal blow comes, aims not to reclaim, and is not discipline but is only penalty. The guilty man is laid on the great public altar and made a sacrifice for the public good. The object is to make a fearful, terrible impression on the public mind of the evil of transgression and the fearfulness of its consequences. Discipline looks not so much to the support of law as to the recovery of the offender. But the day of judgment has nothing to do with reclaiming the lost sinner. That and all its issues are purely penal. It is strange that these obvious facts should be overlooked.
- 16. There is yet another consideration often disregarded; viz., that underlying any safe dispensation of discipline, there must be a moral law, sustained by ample and fearful sanctions, to preserve the law-giver's authority and sustain the majesty and honour of his government. It would not be safe to trust a system of discipline, and indeed it could not be expected to take hold of the ruined with much force, if it were not sustained by a system of law and penalty. This penal visitation on the unreclaimed sinner must stand forever, an appalling fact, to show that justice is realized, law vindicated, God honored; and to make an enduring and awful impression of the evil of sin and of God's eternal hostility against it.

REMARKS.

1. We hear a great many cavils against future punishment. At these we should not so much wonder, but for the fact that the gospel assumes this truth, and then proposes a remedy. One would naturally suppose the mind would shrink from those fearful conclusions to which it is pressed when the

relations of mere laws are contemplated; but when the gospel interposes to save, then it becomes passing strange that men should admit the reality of the gospel, and yet reject the law and its penalties. They talk of grace; but what do they mean by grace? When men deny the fact of sin, there is no room and no occasion for grace in the gospel. Admitting nominally the fact of sin, but virtually denying its guilt, grace is only a name. Repudiating the sanctions of the law of God and laboring to disprove their reality, what right have men to claim that they respect the gospel? They make it only a farce--or at least a system of amends for unreasonably severe legislation under the legal economy. Let not men who so traduce the law assume that they honour God by applauding his gospel!

2. The representations of the Bible with regard to the final doom of the wicked are exceedingly striking. Spiritual truths are revealed by natural objects: e.g., the gates and walls of the New Jerusalem, to present the splendors and glories of the heavenly state. A spiritual telescope is put into our hands; we are permitted to point it towards the glorious city "whose builder and Maker is God;" we may survey its inner sanctuary, where the worshipping hosts praise God without ceasing. We see their flowing robes of white--the palms of victory in their hands--the beaming joy of their faces--the manifestations of ineffable bliss in their souls. This is heaven portrayed in symbol. Who supposes that this is intended as hyperbole? Who arraigns these representations as extravagant in speech, as if designed to overrate the case, or raise unwarrantable expectations? No man believes this. No man ever brings this charge against what the Bible says of heaven. What is the object in adopting this figurative mode of representation? Beyond question, the object is to give the best possible conception of the facts.

3. Then we have the other side. The veil is lifted, and you come to the very verge of hell to see what is there. Whereas on the one hand all was glorious, on the other all is fearful, and full of horrors.

There is a bottomless pit. A deathless soul is cast therein; it sinks and sinks and sinks, going down that awful pit which knows no bottom, weeping and wailing as it descends, and you hear its groans as they echo and re-echo from the sides of that dread cavern of woe!

4. Here is another image. You have a "lake of fire and brimstone," and you see lost sinners thrown into its waves of rolling fire; and they lash its burning shore, and gnaw their tongues for pain. There the worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched, and "not one drop of water" can reach them to "cool their tongues"--"tormented in that flame."

What think you? Has God said these things to frighten our poor souls? Did He mean to play on our fears for his own amusement? Can you think so? Nay, does it not rather grieve his heart that He must build such a hell, and must plunge therein the sinners who will not honour his law--will not embrace salvation from sinning. through his grace? Ah, the waves of death roll darkly under the eye of the Holy and compassionate One! He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner! But He must sustain his throne, and save his loyal subjects if He can.

5. Turn to another scene. Here is a death-bed. Did you ever see a sinner die? Can you describe the scene? Was it a friend, a relative, dear, very dear to your heart? How long was he dying? Did it seem to you the death-agony would never end? When my last child died, the struggle was long; O, it was fearfully protracted and agonizing! Twenty-four hours in the agonies of dissolving nature! It made me

sick; I could not see it! But suppose it had continued till this time. I should long since have died myself under the anguish and nervous exhaustion of witnessing such a scene. So would all our friends. Who could survive to the final termination of such an awful death? Who would not cry out, "My God, cut it short, cut it short in mercy!" When my wife died, her death-struggles were long and heart-rending. If you had been there, you would have cried mightily to God, "Cut it short! O, cut it short and relieve this dreadful agony!" But suppose it had continued, on and on, by day and by night-day after day, through its slow moving hours, and night after night--long nights, as if there could be no morning. The figure of our text supposes an eternal dying. Let us conceive such a case. Suppose it should actually occur, in some dear circle of sympathizing friends. A poor man cannot die! He lingers in the death--agony a month, a year, five years, ten years--till all his friends are broken down--and fall into their graves under the insupportable horror of the scene: but still the poor man cannot die! He outlives one generation--then another and another; one hundred years he is dying in mortal agony and yet he comes no nearer to the end! What would you think of such a scene? It would be an illustration--that is all--a feeble illustration of the awful "second death!"

God would have us understand what an awful thing sin is and what fearful punishment it deserves. He would fain show us by such figures how terrible must be the doom of the determined sinner. Did you ever see a sinner die? And did you not cry out--Surely the curse of God has fallen heavily on this world! Ah, this is only a faint emblem of that heavier curse that comes in the "second death!"

6. The text affirms that death is the "wages of sin." It is just what sin deserves. Labour earns wages and creates a rightful claim to such remuneration. So men are conceived as earning wages when they sin. They become entitled to their pay. God deems Himself holden to give them their well-deserved wages.

As I have often said, I would not say one word in this direction to distress your souls, if there were no hope and no mercy possible. Would I torment you before the time? God forbid! Would I hold out the awful penalty before you, and tell you there is no hope? No. I say these things to make you feel the need of escaping for your life.

Think of this: "the wages of sin is death!" God is aiming to erect a monument that shall proclaim to all the universe--Stand in awe and sin not! So that whenever they shall look on this awful expression, they shall say--What an awful thing sin is! People are wont to exclaim--O, how horrible the penalty!--They are but too apt to overlook the horrible guilt and ill-desert of sin! When God lays a sinner on his death-bed before our eyes, He invites us to look at the penalty of sin. There he lies, agonizing, groaning, quivering, racked with pain, yet he lives, and lives on. Suppose he lives on in this dying state a day, a week, a month, a year, a score of years, a century, a thousand years, a thousand ages, and still he lives on, "dying perpetually, yet never dead:" finally, the universe passes away; the heavens are rolled together as a scroll--and what then? There lies that sufferer yet. He looks up and cries out, "How long, O HOW LONG?" Like the knell of eternal death, the answer comes down to him, "Eternally, ETERNALLY." Another cycle of eternal ages rolls on, and again he dares to ask, how long? and again the answer rolls back, "Eternally, ETERNALLY!" O how this fearful answer comes down thundering through all the realms of agony and despair

7. We are informed that in the final consummation of earthly scenes, "the judgment shall sit and the

books shall be opened." We shall be there, and what is more, there, to close up our account with our Lord and receive our allotment. Which will you have on that final settlement day? The wages of sin? Do you say, "Give me my wages--give me my wages; I will not be indebted to Christ?" Sinner, you shall have them. God will pay you without fail or stint. He has made all the necessary arrangements, and has your wages ready. But take care what you do! Look again before you take your final leap. Soon the curtain will fall, probation close: and all hope will have perished. Where then shall I be?--And you, where? On the right hand or on the left?

The Bible locates hell in the sight of heaven. The smoke of their torment as it rises up forever and ever, is in full view from the heights of the Heavenly City. There, you adore and worship; but as you cast your eye afar off toward where the rich man lay, you see what it costs to sin. There, not one drop of water can go to cool their burning tongues. Thence the smoke of their torment rises and rises for evermore. Take care what you do to-day!

Suppose you are looking into a vast crater, where the surges of molten lava boil and roll up, and roll and swell, and ever and anon belch forth huge masses to deluge the plains below. Once in my life, I stood in sight of Etna, and dropt[sic.] my eye down into its awful mouth. I could not forbear to cry out "tremendous, TREMENDOUS!" There, said I, is an image of hell! O, sinner, think of hell, and of yourself thrust into it. It pours forth its volumes of smoke and flame forever, never ceasing, never exhausted. Upon that spectacle the universe can look and read--"The wages of sin is death! O, sin not, since such is the doom of the unpardoned sinner!" Think what a demonstration this is in the government of God! What an exhibition of his holy justice, of his inflexible purpose to sustain the interests of holiness and happiness in all his vast dominions! Is not this worthy of God, and of the sacredness of his great scheme of moral government?

Sinner, you may now escape this fearful doom. This is the reason why God has revealed hell in his faithful Word. And now shall this revelation, to you, be in vain and worse than in vain?

What would you think if this whole congregation were pressed by some resistless force close up to the very brink of hell: but just as it seemed that we are all to be pushed over the awful brink, an angel rushes in, shouting as with seraphic trump, "Salvation is possible--Glory to God, GLORY TO GOD, GLORY TO GOD!"

You cry aloud--Is it possible? Yes, yes, he cries, let me take you up in my broad, loving arms, and bear you to the feet of Jesus, for He is mighty and willing to save!

Is all this mere talk? Oh, if I could wet my lips with the dews of heaven, and bathe my tongue in its founts of eloquence, even then I could not describe the realities.

Christian people, are you figuring round and round to get a little property, yet neglecting souls? Beware, lest you ruin souls that can never live again! Do you say--I thought they knew it all? They reply to you--"I did not suppose you believed a word of it yourselves. You did not act as if you did. Are you going to heaven? Well, I am going down to hell! There is no help for me now. You will sometimes think of me then, as you shall see the smoke of my woe rising up darkly athwart the glorious heavens. After I have been there a long, long time, you will sometimes think that I, who once

lived by your side, am there. O remember, you cannot pray for me then; but you will remember that once you might have warned and might have saved me."

O methinks, if there can be bitterness in heaven, it must enter through such an avenue and spoil your happiness there!

The Wants of Man and Their Supply

Lecture XI

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Text.--Luke 15:14: "He began to be in want."

Text.--Matt. 5:6: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

The parable of the prodigal son is intended to illustrate the case of the sinner, coming to himself, opening his eyes to his true condition, and feeling himself destitute, empty, and wretched.

I. Man, in consciousness, is a wonderful being.

II. Man has also an intellectual nature.

III. Man has another side to his nature--the moral and spiritual department.

I. Man, as he stands revealed to himself in consciousness, is a wonderful being.

- 1. By the earliest teachings of consciousness he finds himself to be a duality, consisting of body and soul. Farther revelations made in consciousness show him to be in some respects a tri-unity. For example, he has three classes of mental attributes: sensibility, intellect, and will. Still further, and yet more important in its bearings, he finds himself a tri-unity, inasmuch as he has three sides to his nature; one related to the material universe around him; another to all objects of thought and knowledge; and still another, related to God and to duty. He has first a body, and through this, peculiar relations to the world he lives in. He has appetites for food, and numerous wants that terminate on the physical universe. These wants crave their appropriate supplies, and cannot be satisfied with anything else. In the order of time, these are earliest developed. They are few in number, that is, they may be; and those which are real are so. This class alone cease at death. Yet while they exist, they must be supplied.

- 2. Another fact deserving notice in reference to this class of wants is that man immediately assumes the existence of the objects to which his physical wants are correlated. The infant assumes this by instinct. There is no need that you should prove to man that these objects exist. He assumes this, and has only to inquire where they may be found. By a necessity of his nature he assumes their existence, and sets himself forthwith to search for them.

II. In the next place, let it be noticed that man has also an intellectual nature.

- 1. He is made capable of knowledge, and has also an intense desire to know. These are real wants of his being. God has provided for their supply in the illimitable ocean of truth which invests him on every side. God has also breathed into his soul a spirit of inquiry, and acting out its deep impulses, he must inquire into the truth and reason of things. It is curious to notice the difference between children and other animals. If you had never seen an infant before, and were to study his developments for the first time, you would be forcibly struck with these remarkable traits. The little one begins to notice, and to look inquiringly almost as soon as it begins to look at all. See him fix his eyes upon his little hands, as if he would ask, What are these? He looks into his mother's eye as if he would ask a thousand questions, long before he can utter a word. But you can find no such manifestations of thought and inquiry in the kitten and the lamb. Give them enough to eat and scope for rest and play, and they are satisfied. They will never seem to ask you the reasons of things. Nay more, you cannot awaken within them a spirit of inquiry by any appliances you can employ. It is not in them, and you cannot get it in.
- 2. But the infant is a philosopher by birth. He has intellectual wants lying in his very nature, and he cannot be satisfied without their supply. He must know the reasons of things. This is the true idea of philosophy. The lower animals will lie down perfectly satisfied without knowing the reasons of things, or anything more about things than just suffices to meet their animal wants. But man, even from infancy, has wants pressing upon him in this direction, and he rouses himself like a lion from his lair, to grasp the good his inner being craves in this direction. He cannot be satisfied without. He finds himself related to the whole universe of matter, and O!, what a world is opened to him for inquiry and knowledge! How naturally he looks up and abroad! It is not easy for the horse or the ox to look up. Their eye is prone; but man's is outward and upward. Man is made for inquiry.
- 3. It is this spirit of inquiry which leads so many young people to this place. They come here to get knowledge. How they hang on our lips, and press on us for the reasons of things, as if they could not be satisfied till they have penetrated to the bottom of every subject.
- 4. Men assume that there is an explanation of everything. They assume that these innate demands for knowledge were created, not to be denied--not to remain ungratified, but to be gratified. Hence they grasp after knowledge, searching for it as for silver, and as if they deemed it more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. What young man or young woman has not felt such curiosity excited, as to extort the cry--I must know: I must find out the facts on this subject, and the reasons of the facts besides!

III. Thirdly, man has yet another side to his nature--the moral and spiritual department,

correlated to God, to his attributes and law, and to great questions of duty and destiny.

- 1. Man learns from consciousness that he has such a side to his being--such a department in his nature. Hence he inquires after God. He raises questions about right and wrong, and asks to know the nature of virtue and vice. Often he finds in himself a great uneasiness of which he cannot well define the cause. It puts him upon pressing these inquiries into his responsibilities and his mission in this state of his existence.
- 2. Let it now be especially observed that man instinctively assumes the existence of those things which stand related to each of these three sides of his nature. The infant begins to feel after his food with no thought of question as to the fact of there being food provided for his wants. When intelligence opens, the same assumption is made, that there are verities to be known, and the reasons why these things are so rather than otherwise. In like manner, when the eyes of the moral man begin to open, he assumes his own immortality, and assumes also the existence of a God. This is, indeed, the true account of his knowledge of this truth. Some have supposed that the idea of God in the human mind is wholly a thing of education. It is so in the same sense in which much of our intellectual knowledge is. There are many things about God which we need to learn from his word and from his works. But no man needs to have it demonstrated to him that there is a God, any more than a child needs to have it proved that there is food provided for him in the physical world, or the adult, that there are things to be known. The great cardinal truths pertaining to the existence of God, accountability, and duty, are assumed as readily and surely as men assume that there are truths correlated to their intelligence, or supplies in nature for their animal wants. It is of no use to say that some men are atheists and therefore this doctrine cannot be true. Some men have, by speculation, befooled themselves into the belief (so they say) that there is no physical universe. But they believe in its existence none the less, and crave the good it proffers, and cannot live without it. Each one of these philosophers, although he may deny the existence of any physical universe, and declare there is no such thing as matter, yet expects his dinner at the appointed hour, and needs it for his comfort full as much as if he had not denied the existence of any such thing. So these atheists only know there is a God, although they say, "in their heart," there is none.
- 3. It is vastly difficult for any man to feel at ease while he is resisting the constitutional demands of any department of his nature. "Alas!" said a young and ambitious lawyer, who was driving his business and his books and his briefs,--"alas!" said he, "what is the matter with me! I try to study, and cannot. I try to be happy, but I am not. What do I want? Wherein is the lack that, with all I have, yet leaves me so wretched?"

It was this strain of inquiry which led him to see that he needed God for his portion, and could not find a paradise without Him.

- 4. Men need not wait for the proof of their immortality, or for proof of the necessity of virtue as a means for happiness. They know these things by a spontaneity of their moral nature. They know that holiness is a great want of their moral nature. How plainly do they see and know that they need such a being as God, to love and to obey, to trust and to adore!

I appeal to these students. If you have cultivated the habit of self-study, you have learned

that you cannot find out yourself without finding God. Tracing out the problems of your own existence reveals to you your Maker. An irresistible conviction will force itself upon you that there is a God, and that you have everything to hope from his favor, and everything to fear from his frown. A view of yourself and of your own spiritual wants will show you that nothing else can supply your need but God. Have you not already found that the more you study, and the more you cultivate the habit of reflection, the less you can make yourself happy without God? Most of you find it impossible to enjoy yourselves in sin as you were wont to do before you gave yourselves to thought and reflection. The higher you ascend in the grade of moral and intellectual culture, the more intensely will you feel the want of moral culture and moral enjoyments. It is impossible for you to rise as a man without feeling a growing demand for the presence and influence of God, as your Father and Friend.

- 5. Commonly, as the human mind opens to surrounding objects, and as its powers successively develop themselves, attention is first turned to physical wants, and next to intellectual. In one or the other of these pursuits, or in both, man is wont to become so engrossed as mainly to overlook the moral side of his nature. Yet the wants of his moral being will develop themselves, often in such a way at first as to make him exceedingly wretched, while yet he does not see what ails him, and quite fails to comprehend the reason of his unhappiness. No amount of knowledge or purely mental culture can make him happy. On the contrary, the more he knows the more he wants, and the more intensely dissatisfied he becomes with himself.

The objects that supply his bodily wants are at hand. He meets them on every side, and in abundance. So also, pushing his efforts for this end, he finds ample materials for supplying his intellectual wants. He finds enough for mind to feed upon--enough to exercise his faculties, and interest him in studious thought and earnest research.

- 6. So also with his moral and spiritual wants. These have their correlated objects. God is all around him. In the kingdoms of nature he sees the handiwork of an intelligent, designing Maker; and in the ways of providence, he cannot help seeing the agency of a kind and beneficent Father. As his natural eye gives him the material world, so his spiritual eye would give him God in everything--were it not for the blinding influence of a bad heart. This fearfully darkens his vision to those great spiritual truths he so much needs to know. While he might be advancing hour by hour in the knowledge of God and of spiritual truth, going down into the great depths of sympathy with God, he finds instead a fearful conflict between his depraved impulses and his conscience, under the influence of which, truth gains but a slow access to his soul. Moreover, the moral side of his nature being latest developed, he often becomes so engrossed with sensual or intellectual pursuits, that he scarce has any power left for effective thought upon moral subjects. How fearfully some give way to worldly interests and claims, and others also to intellectual pursuits, some of you must know but too well.
- 7. Yet those moral wants you have neglected will some day arise and make their demands heard. It is well if they assume this urgency while yet their supply is possible. The prodigal son was a case of one who felt the pressure of these wants. He said--"I must go home to my father." David entered on record his testimony--"My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth

my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" The mind thus becomes deeply conscious of cravings and aspirations which have God for their object, and which nothing but God can supply. If you examine the nature of these wants, you find them in part social. The mind craves communion with other minds. It thirsts for society, and wisely concludes that no society, no fellowship with other minds, can in any wise compare with communion with God. Perhaps he has tried the fellowship of mortals, and found it still unsatisfying. Hence he craves the richer, far richer, fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. He longs to rise above communion with the finite to hold communion with the Infinite. Weary of drawing instructions from erring man, he thirsts for the pure fountains of knowledge as they flow from the Infinite Intelligence. Conscious that he must himself exist forever, he craves the acquaintance and sympathy of his eternal Maker and Father. As he comes to know something of his great and glorious Friend, he feels that he needs an eternity in which to study God in his multiform and wonderful works and ways. And when he comes to breathe the atmosphere of purity which invests the glorious Presence, how intensely does he long for deliverance from all moral corruption! O, how does his soul thirst for an ever-growing conformity to God! The language of holy men on the sacred page is exceedingly strong on these points, as we may see from David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles. The latter declares, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him." No one can read these strong utterances of feeling, desire, and purpose, without seeing that the mind may develop itself with amazing intensity in this direction. There is scope and occasion for its utmost energies and aspirations.

REMARKS.

1. He must be wretched who neglects to supply his physical wants. He must pay the stern penalty of his neglect, as he will soon learn to his sorrow. Each organ of the body needs its appropriate development, exercise, and nutriment. He who should disregard the laws of his constitution in respect to the proper supply of these constitutional demands will find ere long that the penalty of such neglect is fearful and sure.

In like manner, if he stultifies himself and takes no pains to inquire after truth and knowledge; if he never troubles himself to know, and denies to his intellectual nature all its just demands, he must be far more wretched than a brute can be. But let a man neglect all spiritual culture and training, he becomes far more wretched still. Physical demands cease with the death of the body; the spiritual must continue during his entire existence, stretching on and still on forever, and probably forever increasing.

2. How cruel for a man to consider himself as merely a brute. Giving himself up to a grovelling life, regardless of his spiritual nature and even of his intellectual nature also, what a wretch he must be! Ye, who are students, know how to pity, and how to despise him! You can understand what he loses, for you know what satisfaction is taken in finding out the reasons of things. But see the mere animal who never looks abroad, never raises an inquiry. Why does he not set himself to study and think? Why not cast his thoughts abroad for knowledge? Why does he live a fool and a dunce, when he might be a man?

3. How cruel to treat anybody else as a mere animal! This is the most cruel thing you can do towards a fellow-being. You deny the existence of those great qualities which constitute him a man. You feed him as you would a horse, withholding all aliment for his intelligent mind. You feed him and your horse, each for the same reason;--you want to keep him in working order to serve your selfish purposes. You regard all knowledge beyond what your horse needs as only so much injury to him. Holding your slave as his master, do you send him to school? Never. Do you teach him to read? Never. Do you provide him any means of instruction? No. In the same manner you shut down the gate upon his moral nature. You close up the windows of his soul and keep it as utterly dark as possible to the light of heaven. You tighten the thumb-screws down on every inlet of knowledge, so that he shall never know that he is anything more or other than a beast! Is not this horrible? What then shall we say of the man who does just this upon himself!

4. The more a man develops his intellectual faculties, yet neglects moral culture, the more miserable he becomes. It is striking to see how wretched the most highly cultivated men become. During all the latter years of his life, Daniel Webster was never seen sober, but he was wretched. While in his senses, his mind was deep in sorrow. Look in upon Congress and see there the great men of our land and of other lands; not a man of them is happy without piety and sound moral culture. Go and ask Byron if his gigantic mind, and almost superhuman genius, made him an angel of bliss. Ask him if he found this world a paradise. Perhaps no man ever cursed his fellow-beings more intensely, or enjoyed less in their society, than he. All such men, with high intellectual culture, make themselves wretched because they leave their moral powers in a state of utter wreck and distortion. There is no escape from this result. High intellectual culture must inevitably develop the idea and the claims of God. Let them turn their inquiries which way they will, they find God, and must feel more or less convicted of obligation to love and obey them. Repelling these obligations, it is impossible that they can be otherwise than wretched. I alluded to the case of a young lawyer who asked--"What makes me so unhappy? I feel myself thoroughly wretched, and surely I can see no reason for it." The secret was this. All his life long he had neglected God. His studies had more and more brought God to view, and his sensibilities, under the action of conscience, had become exceedingly acute. How could he be otherwise than wretched? He might not see the reason of his unhappy state; yet if he had well considered the laws of his moral nature, he would have found the reason lying there. Many of you begin to find the same results in your experience, and you must realize them more and more if you remain alienated in heart from God while yet your intelligence is more and more revealing God and his rightful claims on your heart.

5. Neglecters of God are not well aware either of the cause or the degree of their wretchedness. The wants of their physical nature are all met. They are fed and clad, and have every comfort that their physical system craves. Their social wants too are met. They have friends and society. They have also cultivated taste and any desired amount of objects for its gratification. There is a library and books in plenty. There are works of art from the masters in every profession. What more could they need? Yet they are wretched. What is the matter? How many thousand times has this inquiry been made--What can be the matter with me? I have everything heart can wish, or the eye desire; books, teachers, unbounded sources of information, yet I am unhappy; what does ail me?

I can tell you what. There is another side of your nature, more important than all the rest, and more craving, yet you shut off all its demands, and deny its claims. You have a conscience, yet you resist its

monitions. You have desires, correlated to God, yet you deny them their appropriate gratification. No fact is more ennobling to human nature than this, that man has desires correlated to God even as he has to his fellow men, so that he can no more be happy without God than he can be without the sympathy and society of man. We all understand this law of human nature. We see man thirsting for companionship with his fellow man, longing for society, and we cannot fail to see and to say that man is so constructed in his very nature that he must have society. Deprive him of it and he is wretched. Now the striking fact is that man has an equally strong demand in his very constitution for sympathy and fellowship with God. Unless this too be supplied, he cannot be happy.

Suppose you were to meet a man as ignorant of his physical wants as most men are of their spiritual. He does not understand that he must have food for his stomach; clothes for his body; heat to warm him in the winter frosts. Ah! you would see the reason of his misery. Strange he does not know enough to supply his wants!

Or suppose him equally ignorant of his intellectual wants. He starves his soul of knowledge. Lean and barren, he seems to be panting for something higher and better, yet unaware both of the nature of this craving and of the proper source of supply. How easily could you tell him that "for the soul to be without knowledge is not good."

So there is also a moral side to man's nature, and he can never be supremely happy till he becomes morally perfect. He struggles to get out of his moral agony; feels as if he should die if he cannot get out from under this moral load. Who has not felt this loathing of his abominable self, because he did not and would not search after God! Never did any man long for food or water more intensely than the man, who suffers himself to attend to the inner voice of his moral being, thirsts after God.

6. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst, for when they cry unto God to be filled, He will fill them. Let them cry unto God for bread and water; does He not hear their cry? Ah, verily,--He hears the young ravens when they cry, and the young lions when they roar and suffer hunger; and the infant voices of his intelligent creation are not less sure to come up into his ear. Does He not love to supply these wants which grow out of the nature He gave them? Indeed He does. He spread out the fair earth and its rich fields of lovely green. He meant to fill the earth with supplies for man and beast, yea, for every living thing.

In like manner, of the mental wants of his intelligent creatures. He loves to meet these with open hand;--loves to excite the spirit of inquiry and then supply to us the means of gratification. The things we need to know He loves to teach us.

But our moral and spiritual wants, he is infinitely more ready to supply. Does not your inner heart say,--verily, this must be so? It is so. No sooner does the soul go forth after God, than He is near--ineffably near. It is wonderful to see how soon God is found when once the soul begins in true earnest to inquire after Him. Is it not striking that God should so love to reveal himself and should take such pains to insinuate himself into our confidence, and, as it were, work himself into universal communion and contact with our whole souls, so as to fill every moral want of our being? In view of this desire and effort on his part, and in view also of the means provided and promised for this result, we can see why God should command us to "be filled with the Spirit." Such infinite supplies provided

and such earnest desire manifested on the part of God to have us appropriate these supplies to their utmost extent;--it is as if an ocean of water were suspended above our heads, and we have only to lift the valve and let down these ocean waters upon our needy souls. There is the promise, let down like a silken cord; what have we to do but to take hold of it and pull down infinite blessings!

7. Until man feels his spiritual wants, he will resist all attempts you may make to bring him to God. Hence the necessity of touching the mainspring of danger,--of arousing his fears, and developing his moral sensibility. Hence the need of appeals to his conscience and to his sense of danger. Until you can make his moral nature sensitive and rouse up his dark and dead soul to moral feelings, there is no hope for him. But when you can touch this side of his nature and quicken him to feeling and even to agony under the lash of conscience, and make him really appreciate his wants, then he begins to feel his wants, and to ask how they can be met and supplied. This is the true secret of promoting revivals. You must go around among these dark, insensible minds and pour in light upon this side of their nature. You must wake them up to earnest thought--you must rouse up the man's conscience and soul till he shall cry out after God and his salvation.

I always have strong hopes of students; for although they sometimes get wise in their own conceits, and sometimes render themselves ridiculous by their low ambition, yet, taken as a class, there is great hope of them. If suitable means are used, very many of them will be converted. Probably no class of students ever passed through college, the right means of instruction and influence being used with them, without deeply feeling the power of truth, and many of them becoming converted. They must, almost of necessity, feel every blow that is struck; every truth, brought home clearly through their intelligence upon their conscience, wakens a response; and impels the soul to cry out after God. Hence I have strong hopes of you. Yet many of you, I know, are not now converted. God grant you may be soon! I hope the hearts of this Christian people will reach your case in strong effectual prayer. You can indeed resist every effort made to save you--if you will; you can reject Christ, however earnest his entreaties or tender his loving kindness; but you cannot change your nature so that it shall be happy in rebellion against God and his truth; you cannot hush the rebukes of an abused conscience forever; these wants of your inner being must be met, or what will become of you? Your bodily wants will soon cease; and you need not care much therefore for them. Your intellectual pleasures also must ere long come to an end; for how can they pass over with you into the realm of outer darkness where are weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? Doubtless that is a state not of light, and truth, and joy in pursuit of knowledge; but of delusions, and errors, and of knowledge agonizing its possessor with keenest pangs forever and ever! I do not believe sinners will have any intellectual pleasure in hell. It cannot be possible that they will enjoy any knowledge they will have there, or any means of attaining knowledge. The very idea is precluded by the relations that conscience must sustain to everything they know. All possible knowledge must have some bearing upon God, duty, and their moral relations, and hence must serve only to harrow up their sensibilities with keenest anguish. O how will they gnash their teeth and gnaw their tongues in direst woe forever! "There is no peace," saith my God, "to the wicked!" More and more deeply dissatisfied to all eternity! Execrating and cursing their insane selves for the madness of rejecting God and his gospel when they might have had both. Now it only remains for them to wail in bitterness and anguish, lifting up their unavailing cries, to which the thunders of Jehovah's curse respond in everlasting echoes--"Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

O sinner, will you yet press on into the very jaws of such a hell!

Where Sin Occurs God Cannot Wisely Prevent It

Lecture XII
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Text.--Matt. 18:7: "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

Text.--Luke 17:1: "It is impossible but that offences come; but woe unto him through whom they come!"

An "offence" as used in this passage, is an occasion of falling into sin. It is anything which causes another to sin and fall.

It is plain that the author of the offence is in this passage conceived of as voluntary and as sinful in his act; else the woe of God would not be denounced upon him.

Consequently the passage assumes that this sin is in some sense necessary and unavoidable. What is true of this sin in this respect is true of all other sin. Indeed any sin may become an offence in the sense of a temptation to others to sin, and therefore its necessity and unavoidableness would then be affirmed by this text.

The doctrine of these texts, therefore, is that sin, under the government of God, cannot be prevented. I purpose to examine this doctrine; to show that, nevertheless,

I. Sin is utterly inexcusable as to the sinner;

II. Then answer some objections, and conclude with remarks.

I. Sin is utterly inexcusable as to the sinner.

When we say it is impossible to prevent sin under the government of God, the statement still calls for another inquiry, viz.: Where does this impossibility lie? Is it on the part of the sinner, or on the part of God? Which is true; that the sinner cannot possibly forbear to sin, or that God cannot prevent his sinning?

- 1. The first supposition answers itself, for it could not be sin if it were utterly unavoidable. It might be his misfortune; but nothing could be more unjust than to impute it to him as his crime.

But we shall better understand where this impossibility does and must lie, if we first recall to mind some of the elementary principles of God's government.

- 2. Let us then, consider that God's government over men is moral, and known to be such by every intelligent being. By the term moral, I mean that it governs by motives, and does not move by physical force. It adapts itself to mind, not to matter. It contemplates mind as having intellect to understand truth, sensibility to appreciate its bearing upon happiness, conscience to judge of the right, and a will to determine a course of voluntary action in view of God's claims. So God governs mind. Not so does He govern matter. The planetary worlds are controlled by quite a different sort of agency. God does not move them in their orbits by motives but by a physical agency.

I said, all men know this government to be moral by their own consciousness. When its precepts and its penalties come before their minds, they are conscious that an appeal is made to their voluntary powers. They are never conscious of any physical agency coercing obedience.

- 3. God's government implies in man the power to will, or not to will;--to will right, or to will wrong;--to choose or to refuse the great good which Jehovah promises. It also implies intelligence. The beings to whom law is addressed are capable of understanding it. They have also, as I have said, a conscience, by which they can appreciate and must affirm its obligations.
- 4. You need to distinguish broadly between the influence of motive on mind and of mechanical force upon matter. The former implies voluntariness; the latter does not. The former is adapted to mind and has no adaptation to matter; the latter equally is adapted to matter but has no possible application to mind. In God's government over the human mind, all is voluntary; nothing is coerced as by physical force. Indeed it is impossible that physical force should directly influence mind. Compulsion is precluded by the very nature of moral agency. Where compulsion begins, moral agency ends. If it were possible for God to force the will as he forces the moon along in her orbit, to do so would subvert the very idea of a moral government. Neither praise nor blame could attach to any actions of beings, so moved. Persuasion, brought to bear upon mind, is always such in its nature that it can be resisted. By the very nature of the case, God's creatures must have power to resist any amount of even his persuasion. There can be no power in heaven or earth to coerce the will, as matter is coerced. The nature of mind forbids its possibility. And if it were possible, it would still be true that in just so far as God should coerce the human will, He would cease to govern morally.
- 5. God is infinitely wise. Men can no more doubt this than they can doubt their own existence. He has infinite knowledge. He knows everything--i.e., all objects of knowledge; and knows them all perfectly. He is also infinitely good, his will being always conformed to his perfect knowledge and always controlled by infinite benevolence.
- 6. His infinite goodness implies that He does the best He can, always, and every where. In no

instance does He ever fail to do the very best He can do, so that He can appeal to every creature and say--What more can I do to prevent sin than I am doing! Indeed, He does so appeal to every intelligent mind. He made this appeal through Isaiah to the ancient Jews--"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

Every moral agent in the universe knows that God has done the best he could do in regard to sin. Do not you know this, each one of you? Certainly you do. He himself, in all his infinite wisdom could not suggest a better course than that which He has taken. Men know this truth so well, they never can know it better. You may at some future day realize it more fully when you shall come to see its millions of illustrations drawn out before your eyes; but no demonstration can make its proof more perfect than it is to your own minds today.

- 7. Now sin does in fact exist under God's government. For this sin, God either is or is not to blame. Every man knows that God is not to blame for this sin, for man's own nature affirms that He would prevent it if He wisely could. Certainly if He was able wisely to prevent sin in any case where it actually occurs, then not to do so nullifies all our conceptions of his goodness and wisdom. He would be the greatest sinner in the universe if, with power and wisdom adequate to the prevention of sin, He had failed to prevent it.
- 8. Let me here note, also, that what God can not do wisely, he cannot, (speaking morally,) do at all. For He cannot act unwisely. He cannot do things which wisdom forbids. To do so would be to undeify himself. The supposition would make him cease to be perfect, and this were equivalent to ceasing to be God.

Or thus; if He were to interpose unwisely to prevent a sinner from sinning, He would sin himself. I speak now of each instance in which God does not, in fact, interpose to prevent sin. In any of these cases, if He were to interpose unwisely to prevent sin, He would prevent a man from sinning at the expense of sinning himself. Here then is the case. A sinner is about to fall before temptation, or in more correct language, is about to rush into some new sin. God cannot wisely prevent his doing so. Now what shall be done? Shall He let that sinner rush on to his chosen sin and self-wrought ruin; or shall He step forward, unwisely, sin himself, and incur all the frightful consequences of such a step? He lets the sinner bear his own responsibility. Why should not He? Who would wish to have God sin?

This is a full explanation of every case in which man does in fact sin and God does not prevent it.

And this is not conjecture, but is logical certainly. No truth can be more irresistibly and necessarily certain than this. I once heard a minister say in a sermon--"It is not irrational to suppose that in each case of sin, it occurs as it does because God cannot prevent it." After he retired from the pulpit, I said to him--Why did you leave the matter so? You left your hearers to infer that perhaps it might be in some other way; that this was only a possible theory, yet that some other theory was perhaps even more probable. Why did

you not say, This theory is certain and must necessarily be true?

Thus the impossibility of preventing sin lies not in the sinner, but wholly with God. Sin, it should be remembered, is nothing else than an act of free will, always committed against one's conviction of right. Indeed if a man did not know that selfishness is sin, it would not be sin in his case.

- 9. Once more, sin is always committed against and in despite of motives of infinitely greater weight than those which induce to sin. The very fact that his conscience condemns the sin is his own judgment on the question, proving that in his own view the motives to sin are infinitely contemptible when put in the scale to measure those against the sin in question. Every sinner knows that sin is a willful abuse of his own powers as a moral agent--of those noblest powers of his being in view of which he is especially said to be made in the image of God. Made like God with these exalted attributes, capable of determining his own voluntary activities intelligently if he will;--in accordance with his reason and his conscience if he will;--he yet in every act of sin abuses and degrades these powers, tramples down in the very dust the image of God enstamped on his being, and with the capacities of becoming an angel, makes himself a fool. Clothed with a dignity of nature akin to that of his Maker, he chooses to debase himself to the level of brutes and of devils. With a face naturally looking upwards--with an intelligence that grasps the great truths of God;--with a reason that postulates and affirms the great necessary principles involved in his moral duties and relations;--with capacities which fit him to sit on a nation's throne; he yet says--Let me take this glorious image of God and debase it in the dust! Let me cast myself down, till there shall be no lower depth of degradation to which I can sink!
- 10. Sin is in every instance a dishonoring of God. This every sinner must know. It casts off his authority, spurns his advice, maltreats his love. Truly does God himself say--"A son honoreth his father and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"

What sinner ever supposed that God neglects to do anything He wisely can do to prevent sin? If this be not true, what is conscience but a lie and a delusion? Conscience always affirms that God is clear of all guilt in reference to sin. In every instance in which conscience condemns the sinner, it necessarily must and actually does fully acquit God.

These remarks will suffice to show that sin in every instance of its commission, is utterly inexcusable.

II. We are next to notice some objections.

- 1. "If God is infinitely wise and good, why need we pray at all? If He will surely do the best possible thing always and all the good He can do, why need we pray?"

I answer. Because his infinite goodness and wisdom enjoin it upon us. Who could ask a better reason than this? If you believe in his infinite wisdom and goodness, and make this belief the basis of your objection, you will certainly, if honest, be satisfied with this answer.

But again I answer. It might be wise and good for him to do many things if sought unto in prayer, which he could not wisely do, unasked. You cannot therefore infer that prayer never changes the course which God voluntarily pursues.

- 2. Objecting again, you ask why we should pray to God to prevent sin, if He can not prevent it? If under the circumstances in which sin exists, God cannot, as you hold, prevent sin, why go to him and pray him to prevent it?

I answer--We pray for the very purpose of changing the circumstances. This is our object. And prayer does change the circumstances. If we step forward and offer fervent effectual prayer, this quite changes the state of the case. Look at Moses pleading with God to spare the nation after their great sin in the matter of the golden calf. God said to him--"Let me alone that I may destroy them, and I will make of thee a great nation." Nay, said Moses, for what will the Egyptians say? And what will all the nations say? They have long time said, The God of that people will not be able to get them through that vast wilderness; now therefore, what will thou do for thy great name? "Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin;--and if not, blot me, I pray thee out of thy book which Thou hast written."

This prayer, coming up before God, greatly changed the circumstances of the case. For this prayer, God could honorably spare the nation--it was so honorable for him to answer this prayer.

- 3. Yet further objecting, you ask--"Why did God create moral agents at all if He foresaw that He could not prevent their sinning?"

I answer. Because He saw that on the whole it was better to do so. He could prevent some sin in this race of moral agents; could over-rule what He could not wisely prevent, to as to bring out from it a great deal of good, and so that in the long run, he saw it better, with all the results before him, to create than to forbear; therefore wisdom and love made it necessary that He should create. Having the power to create a race of moral beings--having also power to convert and save a vast multitude of them, and power also to over-rule the sin he should not prevent so that it should evolve immense good, how could He forbear to create as He did?

- 4. But if God can not prevent sin, will He not be unhappy?

No; He is entirely satisfied to do the best He can, and accept the results.

- 5. But some will say--Is not this "limiting the Holy One of Israel?" No. It is no proper limitation of God's power to say that He cannot do anything that is unwise. Nor do we limit His power when we say--He cannot move mind just as He moves a planet. That is no proper subject of power which is in its own nature absurd and impossible.

Yet these are the only directions in which we have spoken of any limitations to his power.

But you say, could not God prevent sin by annihilating each moral agent the instant

before he would sin? Doubtless He could; but we say if this were wise He would have done it. He has not done it, certainly not in all cases, and therefore it is not always wise.

But you say, Let him give more of his Holy Spirit. I answer, He does give all He can wisely, under existing circumstances. To suppose He might give more than He does, circumstances being the same, is to impeach his wisdom or his goodness.

Some people seem greatly horrified at the idea of setting limits to God's power. Yet they make assumptions which inevitably impeach his wisdom and his goodness. Such persons need to consider that if we must choose between limiting his power on the one hand, or his wisdom and his love on the other, it is infinitely more honorable to him to adopt the former alternative than the latter. To strike a blow at his moral attributes is to annihilate his throne. And further, let it be also considered, as we have already suggested, that you do not in any offensive sense limit his power when you assume that he cannot do things naturally impossible, and cannot act unwisely.

Let these remarks suffice in the line of answer to objections.

I know that you who are students will say that this must be true. You are accustomed to notice the action of your own moral powers. You have a moral sense, and it has been in some good degree developed. You know it is utterly impossible that God should act unwisely. You know He must act benevolently, always doing the best thing he can do. He has given you a nature which affirms, postulates, intuitively these truths. Else there could be no conscience. The presence and action of a conscience implies that these great truths respecting the moral nature of God are indisputably affirmed in your soul by your own moral nature.

I address you therefore as those who have a conscience. Suppose it were otherwise. Suppose all that we call conscience--the entire moral side of your nature, should suddenly drop out, and I should find myself speaking to a shoal of moral idiots--beings utterly void of a conscience! How desolate the scene? But I am not speaking to such an audience. Therefore I am sure that you will understand and appreciate what I say.

REMARKS.

1. We may see the only sense in which God could have purposed the existence of sin. It is simply negative. He purposed not to prevent it in any case where it does actually occur. He does not purpose to make moral agents sin; not for example, Adam and Eve in the garden, or Judas in the matter of betraying Christ. All He purposed to do Himself was to leave them with only a certain amount of restraint--as much as He could wisely impose; and then if they would sin, let them bear the responsibility. He left them to act freely and did not positively prevent their sinning. He never uses means to make men sin. He only forbears to use unwise means to prevent their sinning. Thus his agency in the existence of sin is only negative.
2. The existence of sin does not prove that it is the necessary means of the greatest good. Some of you are aware that this point has been often mooted in theological discussions. I do not purpose now to go

into it at length, but will only say that in all cases wherein men sin, they might obey God instead of sinning. Now the question here is--If they were to obey rather than sin, would not a greater good accrue? We have these two reasons for the affirmative: (1.) that by natural tendency, obedience promotes good and disobedience evil: and (2.) that in all those cases, God earnestly and positively enjoins obedience. It is fair to presume that He would enjoin that which would secure the greatest good.

3. The human conscience always justifies God. This is an undeniable fact--a fact of universal consciousness. The proof of it can never be made stronger, for it stands recorded in each man's bosom.

Yet a very remarkable book has recently appeared--"The Conflict of Ages"--which is obviously built upon the opposite assumption--viz., that the human conscience does not unqualifiedly condemn man; but except under the light of this peculiar theory, does in fact condemn God. This theory, adopted professedly to vindicate God as against the human conscience, holds that there was a pre-existent state in which we all lived and sinned, and there forfeited our title to a moral nature, unbiased toward sinning. There we had a fair probation. Here, if we suppose this to be the commencement of our moral agency, we do not have a fair probation, and conscience therefore does not, and in truth cannot, justify God except on the supposition of a pre-existent state.

The entire book, therefore is built on the assumption of a conflict between the human conscience and God. A shocking assumption! A brother remarked to me of this that it seemed to him to be the most outrageous and blasphemous indictment against God that could be drawn. Yet the author intended no such thing. He is undoubtedly a good man, but in this particular, egregiously mistaken.

The fact is, conscience does always condemn the sinner and justify God. It could not affirm obligation without justifying God. The real controversy therefore, is not between God and the conscience, but between God and the heart. In every instance in which sin exists, conscience condemns the sinner and justifies God.--This of itself is a perfect and sufficient answer to the whole doctrine of that book. It knocks out the only and whole foundation on which it is built. If that book be true, men never should have had a conscience until that book was published, read, understood, and believed. No man should ever have been convicted of sin until he came to see that he had existed in a previous state and began his sinning there.

Yet the facts are right over against this. Everywhere in all ages, with no deference to this book, and no disposition to wait for its tardy developments,--everywhere and though [sic.] all time the human conscience has stood up to condemn each sinner and compel him to sign his own death-warrant; and acquit his Maker of all blame. These are the facts of human nature and life.

4. Conversion consists precisely in this: the heart's consent to these decisions of the conscience. It is for the heart to come over to the ground occupied by the conscience, and thoroughly acquiesce in it as right and true. Conscience has a long time been speaking; it has always held one doctrine; and has long been resisted by the heart: now, in conversion, the heart comes over, and gives in its full assent to the decisions of conscience; that God is right, and that sin and himself a sinner, are utterly wrong.

And now do any of you want to know how you may become a Christian? This is it. Let your heart justify God and condemn sin, even as your conscience does. Let your voluntary powers yield to the necessary affirmations of your reason and conscience. Then all will be peaceful within because all will be right.

But you say--I am trying to do this! Ah, I know it to be the case with some of you that you are trying to resist to your utmost. You settle down as it were with your whole weight while God would fain draw you by his truth and Spirit. Yet you fancy you are really trying to yield your heart to God. A most unaccountable delusion!

5. In the light of this subject we can see the reason for a general judgment. God intends to clear Himself from all imputation of wrong in the matter of sin, before the entire moral universe. Strange facts have transpired in his universe, and strange insinuations have been made against his course. These matters must all be set right. For this He will take time enough. He will wait till all things are ready. Obviously He could not bring out his great trial-day till the deeds of earth have all been wrought--till all the events of this wondrous drama have had their full development. Until then He will not be ready to make a full expose of all His doings. Then He can and will do it most triumphantly and gloriously.

The revelations of that day will doubtless show why God did not interpose to prevent every sin in the universe. Then He will satisfy us as to the reasons He had for suffering Adam and Eve to sin and for leaving Judas to betray his Master. We know now that He is wise and good, although we do not know all the particular reasons for his conduct in the permission of sin. Then, He will reveal those particular reasons, as far as it may be best and possible. No doubt He will then show that his reasons were so wise and good that He could not have done better.

6. Sin will then appear infinitely inexcusable and odious. It will then be seen in its true relations toward God and his intelligent creatures, inexpressibly blameworthy and guilty.

Take a case. Suppose a son has gone far away from the paths of obedience and virtue. He has had one of the best of fathers, but he would not hear his counsels. He had a wise and affectionate mother, but he sternly resisted all the appeals of her tenderness and tears.--Despite of the most watchful care of parents and friends, he would go astray. As one madly bent on self-ruin, he pushed on, reckless of the sorrow and grief he brought upon those he should have honored and loved. At last the issues of such a course stand revealed. The guilty youth finds himself ruined in constitution, in fortune, and in good name. He has sunk far too low to retain even self-respect. Nothing remains for him but agonizing reflections on past folly and guilt. Hear him bewail his own infatuation. "Alas," he cries, "I have almost killed my venerable father, and long ago I had quite broken my mother's heart. All that folly and crime in a son could do, I have done to bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. No wonder that having done so much to ruin my best friends, I have plucked down a double ruin on my own head. No sinner ever more richly deserved to be doubly damned than myself."

Thus truth flashes upon his soul and thus his heart quails and his conscience thunders condemnation.--So it must be with every sinner when all his sins against God shall stand revealed before his eyes and there shall be nothing left for him but intense and unqualified self-condemnation.

7. God's omnipotence is no guaranty to any man that either himself or any other sinner will be saved. I know the Universalist affirms it to be. He will ask--Does not the fact of God's omnipotence, taken in connection with His infinite love, prove that all men will be saved? I answer, No! It does not prove that God will save one soul. With ever so much proof of God's perfect wisdom, love, and power we could not infer that He would save even one sinner. We might just as reasonably infer that He would send the whole race to hell. How could we know what His wisdom would determine? How could we infer what the exigencies of His government might demand? In fact the only ground we have for the belief that He will save any sinner is not at all our inference from His wisdom, love, and power; but is wholly and only His own declarations as to this matter. Our knowledge is wholly from revelation. God has said so; and this is all we know about it.

Yet further I reply to the Universalist, that God's omnipotence saves nobody. Salvation is not wrought by physical omnipotence. It is only by moral power that God saves, and this can save no man unless he consents to be saved.

8. How bitter the reflections which sinners must have on their death-beds, and how fearfully agonizing when they pass behind the veil and see things in their true light. Did you ever think when you have seen a sinner dying in his sins what an awful thing it is for a sinner to die? You mark the lines of anguish on his countenance; you see the look of despair; you observe he can not bear to hear the word of the awful future. There he lies and death pushes on his stern assault. The poor victim struggles in vain against his dreaded foe. He sinks, and sinks, his pulse runs lower, and yet lower; look in his glassy eye; mark that haggard brow; there, he breathes not; but all suddenly, he stares as one affrighted; throws up his hands wildly, screams frightfully; sinks down and is gone to return no more! And where is he now? Not beyond the scope of thought and reflection. He can see back into the world he has left. Still he can think. Alas, his misery is that he can do nothing but think! As said the prisoner in his solitary cell: I could bear torture or I could endure toil; but O, to have nothing to do but to think! To hear the voice of friend no more--to say not a word--to do nothing from day to day and from year to year but to think! that is awful. So of the lost sinner. Who can measure the misery of incessant self-agonizing thought? Now, when at any time your reflections press uncomfortably and you feel that you shall almost go deranged, you can find some drop of comfort for your fevered lips; you can for a few moments, at least, fall asleep, and so forget your sorrows and find a transient rest; but oh! when you shall reach the world where the wicked find no rest--where there can be no sleep--where not one drop of water can reach you to cool your tongue: Alas, how can your heart endure or your hands be strong in that dread hour! God tried in vain to bless and save you. You fought Him back and plucked down on your guilty head a fearful damnation!

9. What infinite consolation will remain to God after He shall have closed up the entire scenes of earth! He has banished the wicked and taken home the righteous to his bosom of love and peace. I have done, says He, all I wisely could to save the race of man. I made sacrifices cheerfully; sent my well-beloved Son gladly; waited as long as it seemed wise to wait, and now it only remains to over-rule all this pain and woe for the utmost good, and rejoice in the bliss of the redeemed forevermore.

There are the guilty lost. Their groans swell out and echo up the walls of their pit of woe:--it is to the

holy only so much evidence that God is good and wise and will surely sustain his throne in equity and righteousness forever. It teaches most impressive lessons upon the awful doom of sin. There let it stand and bear its testimony, to warn other beings against a course so guilty and a doom so dreadful!

There, in that world of woe, may be some of our pupils, possibly some of our own children. But God is just and his throne stainless of their blood. It shall not mar the eternal joy of his kingdom, that they would pull down such damnation on their heads. They insisted they would take the responsibility and now they have it.

Sinner, do you not care for this to-day? Will you come to the inquiry meeting this evening to trifle about your salvation? I can tell you where you will not trifle. When the great bell of time shall toll the death-knell of earth and call her millions of sons and daughters to the final judgment, you will not be in a mood to trifle! You will surely be there! It will be a time for serious thought--an awful time of dread. Are you ready to face its revelations and decisions?

Or do you say, Enough, ENOUGH! I have long enough withstood his grace and spurned his love; I will now give my heart to God, to be his only, forevermore?

The Ways of Sin Hard; Of Holiness, Pleasant

Lecture XIII

August 16, 1854

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The following passages present the subject on which I propose to speak.

Text.--Prov. 13:15: "The way of transgressors is hard."

Text.--Acts 9:5: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Text.--Isa. 57:20, 21: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." "'There is no peace,' said my God, 'to the wicked.'"

Text.--Matt. 11:29-30: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Text.--1 John 5:3: "And His commandments are not grievous."

Text.--Prov. 3:17: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

You will at once perceive the drift and meaning of these passages, many of which are found in all parts of the Bible. Their general doctrine is that the ways of sin are full of trouble, but that the ways of holiness are pleasant and peaceful. It will be my present object to illustrate this doctrine; to show that it must of necessity be true; and hence that whatever claims to be true religion and yet dissents from this doctrine cannot be true.

To compass these ends I must,

I. Enquire what true religion is;

II. What is implied in it;

III. What sin is;

IV. What a life of sin implies;

V. Show that religion is naturally easy and delightful;

VI. That on the contrary a course of sin is and must be, hard, oppressive, delusive and self-ruinous.

I. What is true religion?

To say all in a word, it is true devotion of heart and life to God. It supposes that instead of living to yourself, you live to God. You seek to consecrate all your powers to His service only. According to the Bible, true religion is supreme love to God, and equal, impartial love to man. It is not a state of passive emotion, but of supreme devotion to God. It manifests itself in good will to all beings, and in a voluntary committal of all our powers to God and to the good of all His creatures, so far as they become known to us.

II. True religion implies many things.

- 1. In all the case of all sinners it must imply repentance--the turning of the heart away from all iniquity, and the utter rejection of all sin. This must be the first great step from sin to holiness.
- 2. It also must imply confidence in God and in His general veracity. When the heart turns round to become God's friend, it must confide in Him as good and as truthful.
- 3. There will also be a state of warm and lively confidence in Jesus Christ, embracing all those points in which He reveals Himself as our Savior from sin and condemnation.
- 4. There will also be a state of universal acquiescence in the providence of God. Believing in the fact that God rules in nature over all the external and internal worlds, the mind accepts this fact with joy and with trust. The mind being in a state of trust towards God and of true devotion to His will, this acquiescence in His general providence sits easy and is natural. Hence there

will be an earnest sympathy with God in all His ways.

III. On the other hand, we must enquire, What is sin?

- 1. Sin is devotion to self. Sin puts self in the place of God as the supreme object of regard and affection. It values nothing except as related to self. It makes self-gratification its first law.
- 2. Of course this implies opposition to God and stubborn impenitence. The man cleaves pertinaciously to self, and is ready to sacrifice everything else to promote selfish ends. He is utterly distrustful of God, and has no sympathy with His character, government and ways.

IV. Sinning, unrestrained by gospel grace, and made the law of life as it always is in the unrenewed soul, will of course imply a supreme devotion to some forms of selfish gratification.

The man aims to provide for himself. His passions and appetites may be more or less elevated; his choice among numerous modes of self-gratification is a matter of taste and training; but he may always be known by the fact that whatever his heart craves he gives himself up to obtain and enjoy. The sum of the whole matter is that his soul is selfish.

V. Religion is altogether a natural state of mind, easy, peace-giving and delightful. Its exercises are in entire accord and with our constitutional nature and with the nature and relations of things.

- 1. In a religious state of mind, man is in harmony with himself. Each function of his active powers performs its appropriate work, without friction and irritation. The affirmations of reason and the monitions of conscience are heard with quiet joy and are duly honored. The legitimate demands of animal nature are met, and the soul is not thereby brought into bondage. The social law of his nature finds ample scope in the new and glorious field of communion with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ. A truly religious man is in harmony with God and with all His manifestations. He loves the law; he loves the gospel. Seeing God in all the ways of His providence he rejoices to know that here too is the land of his Father, doing all things well. Thus coming into contact with God in every point, and being at peace and in harmony with all God is and does, how can he be otherwise than blessed?
- 2. By the same natural law, his relations towards his fellow beings are all easy and naturally peaceful. He accords to them, to each and to all,--their rights, and does it with real gratification. He enjoys seeing and making them happy. Hence he does not come into collision with them, as a selfish man is likely to, everyday. In reference to them also, his own mind feels self-respect, instead of being harassed with self-reproaches. Thus he finds himself at peace with all the universe of created beings, and each one, as he becomes known, heightens the peace and joy of his soul. His mind works in harmony with all true motives; conscience smiles on his soul all along his way. It is a sunny way; for God sheds the light of His face upon it; all holy beings shine and smile upon it. This representation is true not occasionally and under special circumstances only, but necessarily and always where true piety prevails.
- 3. Old bad habits are molded and yielded as soon as the will and conscience come fully under

the power of this law of love to God and man. Consequently, the tone of his mind becomes more and more easy and flowing, as the selfishness that chafes and irritates is subdued and rooted out. His bosom becomes the natural home of peace and joy, intruders and disturbers being thrust out.

- 4. The Bible represents this course as like the shining light of morning, which, from the faintest streaks, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. This is its natural law. Joy and peace must advance with progress in obedience and self-subjugation to God's will. This state must be intensely delightful because all the work in which God calls the Christian to engage is pleasant, and just what he most of all loves. These are not the labors of a slave, but of a free man, working for an object, with a heart and therefore "with a will." He makes God's glory his own end, the very thing in which he chiefly delights. Hence all he has to do is to promote his own highest interests, for he has identified his own highest interests with God's honor.
- 5. He has a glorious fellowship. No longer in universal warfare with God, and all the good in heaven and in earth, he is at peace with all, and in most refreshing sympathy. His enemies now are not the good and the mighty, but the bad and the weak. God is on his side, and his friends have God on their side. Against him are the world, the flesh and the devil; but for him are friends, more and mightier,--God, his angels, and all the good in earth or heaven. Well and fitly does the Bible speak of him as "more than a conqueror through Him who has loved us."
- 6. The scriptures do not deny that the good man has conflicts. No, they really recognize this fact; but they provide for him all the armor he wants; and pledge him the strong aid of the Almighty God besides.

I am speaking now of a state of true religion, not of legality. Many seem to misunderstand this subject. They talk as if this world must be dull and comfortless, and as if God had made it as bad as He well could. But this is a most blasphemous representation. When the Bible speaks of the present state as a warfare, it always represents the believing soul as gaining victories through Jesus Christ, his Lord. He conquers through abounding grace, and thus finds peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

VI. On the contrary a course of sin is a hard state.

- 1. The way of transgressors, we have the best authority for saying, is hard. It is all unnatural, in the sense of a violation of the laws of our being. It deranges and tramples down each and every one of these laws. The mind conflicts with itself and wars perfectly against its own judgment and conscience. It also wars upon its own best interests; and not least, against the truth. God made the human mind to move in harmony with truth. But sin is a state of eternal antagonism against truth, and therefore must inevitably be one of disquiet and wretchedness.
- 2. This state of sin is necessarily one of warfare with all the wicked, for selfish men are by natural law at loggerheads with each other. Each man, having a supremely selfish interest to maintain, finds himself thoroughly in conflict with every other supremely selfish man. Notice their locks and bolts and bars. See how they build up their walls of protection against each other. The laws they make against all forms of selfish aggression upon property and the care

they manifest to put everything in writing, show that they have no confidence in wicked men as generally honest. Surely God does not make men to devour each other like beasts of prey. Nor did He make man to live like the swine, regarding the indulgence of his appetites and passions as his chief concern. Surely such a course of living must be for man, such as he is made, most unnatural.

- 3. Sin is, of course, a constant warfare against God and against all the interests of God's great family and kingdom.

I said it was a state of universal warfare. And truly there is not a being, not a creature under heaven, against whom the sinner is not at war. He fights every man, every beast. He would lay the whole universe under contribution to minister to his own selfish enjoyment. He would lay his commands on God if he could. If he resorts to prayer instead of command, it is only because he finds he cannot command to any purpose. He prays only in hope thereby to make God his own servant. He cares no more for God than for the devil, only as His aid may be of more value to himself. If he could, how soon would he engross the universe to make it subservient to his own selfish ends! Gladly would he command and appropriate all the fishes of the sea and the cattle of a thousand hills. If it might subserve his own selfish ends, he would blot out the sun in the heavens, little caring how many equally good with himself were thereby doomed to eternal darkness. But you say--"Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" "I never thought of doing such things!" Stay! Let me tell you the only reason why you have not. It is only because you have never supposed you could. Just as you have never thought of being king of England or President of the United States; yet if the way were open and you could reach either of these summits or power by a little sacrifice of your conscience, would you not do it? Certainly you would! Who would trust you to be disinterested and to act according to a sound conscience? No man. But what have you not done? A man who would do a little meanness for a sixpence would do a great villainy for a kingdom. A man who would quibble for a cent would do more than quibble for governmental office and patronage.

Thus sin throws everything into utter and interminable disorder. It is war, war, WAR on all interests--against God and against all created beings! Of course, there can be no rest to the guilty soul, day or night. Forcefully does the Bible say of the wicked--"He is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Did you ever stand on the shore of the sea and look down upon its restless waters, as they rolled up masses of mud and filth, boiling and surging perpetually? I have, and as I looked I thought of this striking and beautiful passage, and have sighed to think how truthful its representations are.

- 4. Sin is a constant failure. The sinner never can realize his own expectations. You find it so, and the more as you advance the farther in your career. Some of you are yet young and have not yet had so much bitter experience of disappointment as you are destined to have if you still press on in your career of sin. Now you dance along on the top waves of pleasure; yet you must confess you have already seen one bubble burst after another, just at the moment when you thought you had almost seized a treasure. But you still expect to catch the most of them and to

find ample enjoyment yet in sin. Alas, you need not hope to outdo all the sinners who have gone before you! You need not flatter yourself you shall yet baffle the Almighty and disprove His fearful threats against the sinner!

These older men and women; have they found their fill of joy in sin? Oh no. Your desire has enlarged itself as hell and is never satisfied. The more you get, the more you fail in your purpose as to real happiness. You are working against all the relations in which you are placed. The whole of your wicked selfish life is a struggle for vanity, and must therefore, inevitably, prove a failure. John Jacob Astor said, near the close of his life, after he had amassed millions--"My life has been a perfect failure." Perhaps few men have meant more by these words than he. Indeed the more you think you get, the more you make yourself wretched. With great wealth comes great care and trouble. Solid happiness is not there.

- 5. Political ambition is a great snare to the soul. A young student says, "I will study law and become a statesman." Suppose you try and suppose you succeed even to your highest expectations. By incessant scheming and unwearied effort you get up step by step, till you become a member of the State Legislature, and at last, of Congress. What now? Pause and ask how much you have really gained in the line of the happiness you are so earnestly seeking. Are you a whit more happy than when you had your first election and were made a constable? Not at all more. The higher you ascend, the more you must become the tool of a party, and consequently the more really degraded you must be. You are after honor. Think of that--after honor! Look at the career and final end of Daniel Webster! Who ever struggled harder to climb the steep of official preferment than he! Yet he is dead; and now it comes to this that the greatest and the best thing which can be said of his commendation is that he died a Christian! There seems to be no point which his eulogists are more anxious to make out than this; with how much difficulty, I need not stop to say.

But, did he live a happy life? I am not aware that anybody claims this for him. And how, of Clay and Calhoun? Does any man claim that they were happy men while they lived? No. Every intelligent man knows the contrary. Webster ran away from religious life and gave himself up to political aspirations; but what is the result after all? There is no higher or better thing sought to be proved of him than that he died a Christian. Andrew Jackson retired from the Presidency and made profession of religion. This was the acme of his honor. Nothing else do his eulogists seize upon with so much interest after his death. And verily, "the Christian is the highest style of man." I was once struck with the remark made by the President of a college. He said he should honor his station and do nothing to its discredit. I thought then, "Is this true honor?" Is this a correct principle? Is the honor of being President of a college to be one moment compared with the honor of being a Christian, a son and an heir of God? But to pass by this as comparatively nothing and to speak of the honor of a President's station as if this were to be made law in morals and propriety, is surely anything but reasonable.

A course of sin is a course of constant failure to realize present expectations. Sinners are always aiming at what they never attain. With unwearied diligence they seek happiness, but evermore in those directions where it is not to be found. Their life is made up of

constant lusting, sometimes for one thing, sometimes for another. Even the young who have least experience in the disappointments of earth, are fully aware, whenever they allow themselves to think, that their pursuits of real good are futile. The entire course of sin is hard work and poor pay, and poor keeping besides; and to make the case yet worse, incessant rebukes from his conscience and his better judgment, all his best friends. It must be seen that this is a bad case.

I have said that sin is an unnatural state. But you will perhaps say to me, I find it very natural for me to sin.

What do you mean by that? I am aware that, if you set your heart upon selfish good, it may be very natural, in one sense, for you to use means to secure it. Yet it is utterly impossible that this should be a natural course in reference to your own constitution, or to your relations to God, to man, or to your own conscience.

REMARKS.

1. It is easy to see why the Bible always represents sinners as being fools. "Madness is in their hearts while they live." "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Such is its language; and the reason of it we can realize in their vain and foolish labor. Solomon set his heart to exhaust every fountain of earthly good. No man can hope to have better facilities for the work than he, or more ample resources. He left on record the results of all his experiments. One word tells the story: "Vanity!" "Vanity of vanities;--all is vanity!" It was not through any failure of means for making a fair trial: it was a necessary failure; a failure founded in the nature of things; in the utter lack of adaptation in such objects, so sought, to satisfy a being so constituted. Man's nature cannot be altered. His relations as a subject of God's government, and as a member of society, are changeless. Hence, if he gives himself up to selfishness, he defeats himself, and only all the more certainly by how much the more ample his resources and elevated his position. The higher he stands, the more he interferes with other interests, and the more palpably he violates the laws of social order.

2. This is not saying that the world has no good in it, provided it be used as it should be. I will not disparage the pleasures of this world, nor anything else God has made. God has not put creatures here to starve them to earthly good. The failure grows wholly out of abuse. Let a man of Solomon's means take an opposite course from his; fall directly and fully in with God's great plan; set himself to do all the good he can; and he will enjoy everything. The very flowers of his garden, which before rebuked his selfish heart, will now smile upon him and regale him with their fragrance. The fact is, a man may enjoy any virtuous course of life, in any sphere of activity, only let him live for God, and serve his generation according to God's will. Take any of the professions or pursuits in common life--suppose the young man enters life as a lawyer, and devotes all his powers to doing the highest general welfare. He must succeed. People will push him forward, step after step; they will put him up because they, as a public, have interests to be served, and they know that he is the man to be trusted to serve them. They see he is not ambitious. This lawyer need not violate his conscience. He rises as fast as any man need to, without. He lives in peace with his own conscience, and dying, he can lie down in peace. His experience presents a case of one who uses the world as not abusing it. He does not live so that after his death, the living tax their wits to the utmost to persuade themselves that he has not gone down straight to hell. Every man spontaneously says, he has gone to his heavenly reward.

3. We see that legalists and formalists labor under a great delusion. They claim to be serving God, but they find His service intolerably hard. I must, he says, I must do this and I must do that. O, it is a hard service! So many meetings--how can he stand it? So much to be done in order to be on good terms with his conscience, and to keep up a good Christian name; what can he do? Now suppose this legalist had a great deal more of this same religion; suppose his time were filled up with it from early morn till the hour of sleep--nothing but meetings and religious duties; and all felt to be intolerably hard; would this become the life and bliss of his soul, or its misery? Would this be heaven, or hell? Now, is it not obvious that such a religion is altogether a delusion?

4. These legal and formal religionists are a great stumbling block to the church and to the world. They misrepresent religion and scandalize it before both saints and sinners. How remarkable is the fact that they introduce a new sort of phraseology into Christian experience, in which you hear continually of burdens, trials, crosses; but never, as in the scriptures, of "joys that pass all understand," and "peace as a river," and "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

5. It is easy to see why sinners think religion must conflict with their present happiness. It is because they see so little of the genuine article, and so much of the counterfeit. It is rare, for example, that they see a mother whose mild, Christian influence throws a heavenly charm over the entire circle of her family and of the society in which she moves. But on the other hand, you find those whose piety is hard, whose souls are in bondage, who go to prayer meeting full of complaints, and who, regarding religion as all of grace, yet assume that this grace is almost unattainable; that God is exceedingly slow to grant it; who in fact will tell you, that since the fall of mere man has been able, with all the grace He could get or God could give, to obey the whole law, but must daily break it in thought, word and deed. How different is this from the Bible. This affirms that "His commandments are not grievous." This promises, "with every temptation, to provide a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." According to the Bible, it is the sinner's life which is hard; but the Christian life is as the shining light, a walking with God, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is indeed represented as a warfare; yet one, which through grace, may be a simple succession of victories and triumphs. It is no doubt true that those who are not converted until they have formed strong habits of vicious indulgence, must have conflicts before they can eradicate and subdue their propensities to sin; but if they take hold of promised grace as they may, they shall go on from strength to strength. As faithful Christians grow older, they usually find greater peace. They know that Christ will bruise Satan under their feet shortly, and the flesh also. At worst, their warfare is not to be compared with that of the sinner. See the sinner smitten of affliction--the hand of God heavy upon him--wife or husband low in death, where can he go for refuge? Alas! there is no hand to bind up his wounds! He cannot look to God--he has no Savior!

But the Christian, smitten of affliction, flies to his Savior's bosom. Does his property "take wings?" Let it go; his chief treasures are ensured in heaven. Losses cannot crush him as they do the sinner. Often you see him greatly joyful under trials so severe as might drive a sinner to distraction.

Sometimes the sinner throws a loose rein on his selfishness, and allows himself in little dishonesties in business. Soon he finds himself uneasy, suspected, and withal, troubled in conscience. A hard time has he, when his old friends begin to say in under tones, "It is best to look out for him; he may possibly be

an honest man, but we had better look sharp." Soon there comes down upon him a chilling suspension of confidence, and if he never did before, he does now find that the way of the transgressor is hard.

How often we see sinners afraid of God's hand in providence. "A dreadful sound is in his ears." There is a fearful thunder-storm abroad; the cold chills run over him; dread horrors fill his soul; to whom can he fly for refuge? Ah! he knows nothing of that peace, which, even amid such scenes, the true Christian enjoys!

Compare the sinner with the Christian under the sudden rush of great calamity. There was Job, a venerable Christian. He staggered a moment under the dreadful pressure of so many and so heavy afflictions; yet see how his soul rallied and still held on trustfully to the arm of the Lord. A worldly man, so tempted, would no doubt have cursed God and died! But having true faith, the afflicted soul will say, "God knows why this comes upon me. Surely I can trust all my case in His hands. Sickness and death cannot come otherwise than by His permission."

The great peace which reposes at the bottom of the Christian's mind under the pressure of great affliction is most admirable, and often really sublime. Property, health, friends, are swept away; yet their anchor lies deep among the great rocks of Jehovah's attributes, and the mighty ship holds steady amid the storm. Like a vessel whose great keel lies so low in the deep waters, that it heeds not the ruffled surface of the sea, so his soul reposes deeply in God, and knows little of the storms that howl or the waves that dash upon the surface. When you thought to find him walking his room in anguish, you are surprised to find him sleeping peacefully as a babe on its mother's bosom. Angels fan him with their wings, and the spirit of faith and promise soothes his brow.

Many forget that sin is in any respect a warfare and a conflict. If they could only be safe in sin, they think all would be well. Hence they speak only of the danger, not of the wrong and wickedness of a life of sin. How great is their mistake! Let it never be granted, that a life of sin, in its best estate, is better than holiness in its place, even for its present results. By the necessary laws of mind, so long as the mind acts benevolently, and is right towards God, the present results will be pleasant, and even blessed. Hence, sinners need not assume that in becoming Christians, they forego the pleasures of life and submit to the bitterness of religion! They need not think of religion as they do of the surgeon's amputating knife; as if religion were little else but sacrifice, hard labor, a hard life and poor pay at that.

Sinners have their trials too, as well as Christians; but without those precious consolations. But in comparison with each other, a sinner and a Christian--take each from the same walks of life, with the same culture, and the same nervous constitution--you see the Christian full of sensibility, but cleaving to Christ; tried sorely, yet deeply reposing on the bosom of Jesus. The other is tossed perpetually, yet not comforted; has no resting place--is full of trouble. He cries out, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." But the Christian says--God has prospered me and I have enjoyed all He has given me. Everything has been doubly dear to me because it has been the gift of God. O! he says, my life has been a sunny way. I have indeed been sick, and I have been well; but everything I have received has been good for me, and has worked out good for my soul. The sinner, right over against this, can only say, "I have had a great deal of trouble; all trouble! trouble!" You have had some good things? "Yes, but--but--" You have had some honors? "Yes, but--but--"

Come to the Christian's couch of death; wipe away the cold sweat, and mark how his face is radiant with joy and peace. He can hardly talk about his trials, so sweetly has he enjoyed them all. Has your time come? "Yes," and turning away he says, "I am ready to go. May God give me patience to wait all His appointed time till my change come!" When Elder Marks was near death, he was called upon to sign his name. He made the effort, but found himself unable to do it. "Glory to God!" cried he, "I am so near heaven, I cannot even write my own name! Are you not glad? Cannot you all rejoice with me?"

Now go, see the sinner. See how bitter his life has been. He lost his wife, and it nearly killed him. His children died, and where could he go for consolation? "Alas," said he, "I had prosperity, but it seemed only to curse me. I had health, but I abused it. I had wealth, but it did me no good. Dark, dark! all is dark in the past. All, too, is dark in the present." Don't tell him he is about to die--his physician dare not trust it, lest it shock his nerves and destroy all the good effect he hopes to get from his medicines. Be silent as the grave; suppress your tears; turn away from this heart-rending scene. God will soon "drive him away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death."

It only remains that I ask you why you will go on in this course. You have nothing to gain by sin. Why should you throw away your immortal soul?

The Indications and The Guilt of Backsliding

Lecture XIV

October 11, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Rev. 3:14-20: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth: Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eye with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

This is one of the Asiatic churches to which Christ sent letters by His amanuensis John. This church

had not been long established, yet had even so soon begun to backslide; hence this letter of rebuke and warning.

In discussing this subject I propose,

I. To show what lukewarmness is;

II. To present some unmistakable indications of this state of mind;

III. Show that it is a most guilty state;

IV. Explain the threatening--" I will spew thee out of my mouth;" and

V. Show that its folly is no less great than its sin.

I. What lukewarmness is.

The persons addressed were professors of religion. In this sense they were not cold;--as men who make no professions of attachment to Christ. Yet though professing much, they had none of that zealous love which belongs to the true Christian life. Indeed they were neither the one thing, nor the other;--were not what Christians should be, nor were they avowed enemies, as open transgressors are. Not as cold as they might be, and not as warm as they should be--they held a position if possible more loathsome than even the cold and the dead.

II. I am to present some indications of this state.

In doing this, I shall naturally give a more definite view of what the state is.

- 1. A profession of religion with a worldly conversation. Christ said no new thing when He said--"But out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh," Everybody knew this before. Everybody must know it. The tongue was made to give utterance to the heart's abundance. Hence that which abounds in a man's heart and fills it will seek utterance in the natural channel. Let the heart be full of the things of God, and the mouth will reveal it. When the heart is full of the world, does not the mouth show it? No matter what the particular form of worldly interest may be, whether stocks, or lands, or trade, or office, or honor, the tongue is not wont to be slow in revealing the abundance of the heart. Why should not the same law obtain in regard to a heart full of religious interest and love?
- 2. Neglect of the Bible. This is emphatically the Christian's Book. He will have one if he can, and having it, will read and study it. Religion presupposes a supreme interest in the Bible. Hence, when the Bible is neglected, you may be sure religion is not much in the heart. To the Christian the Bible does not wear out as other books do. It suffices to read most other books once. You get all they have at one reading, and can then recall whatever you want to reflect upon and use further. Not so with the Bible. No man ever exhausted that at one reading. To the Christian it is a well of water. He does not drain it dry at one draught; in fact he never drinks it

dry; nor does it suffice for his wants to drink but once. His wants reoccur continually, and therefore he comes, and still comes again to draw. It is his daily business to draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Or still to vary the figure, the Bible is his compass, chart and guide: how then can he think to make the voyage of life heaven-ward without keeping this roll in his bosom? Hence, if he neglects his Bible, it must be regarded as an unmistakable evidence of a heart not full of religion.

- 3. When he can read his Bible without interest--when he goes to it as a task, and has no conscious sympathy with its spirit and no love for its principles, he is surely lukewarm. See that professor doing up his Bible reading as the Catholic tells his beads, in a hurry to get through and be off. Is his heart full of religion?
- 4. Neglect of secret prayer. What would you think of a wife who should shun, or should even neglect to seek and improve all opportunities of the society of her husband? Or of a husband who should neglect the society of his wife? In either case, do you think such neglect could be consistent with pure and strong affection? Suppose you were yourself the party neglected; what would you think of professions of love, carried out by such manifestations?

Ask yourself--what is secret prayer? It is the earnest outpouring of the heart to God. Alone with God you enter into deep and unobstructed communion with him. If you love God, you will surely love and seek such communion. If you are debarred the possibility of retirement, still your inward heart will pray. Its inner chamber will become a closet and an altar from which the continual incense will ascend to God. The professed Christian who can neglect such communion with God may know that he is far from warm and earnest love to God.

Or if not altogether omitting the form, he yet does it as a mere duty and a task, in which his heart takes no interest, he may equally know that his first love is gone. If prayer has become a burden, surely his heart lacks warm and earnest love. Do you remember the days of your first love? Where were you then? Not dreading and trying to avoid prayer.

Again, if prayer meetings fail and die out, it is a startling evidence that the church is in a lukewarm state. When Christians can live in the same neighborhood, under the same responsibilities, and yet sustain no meetings for social prayer, you may know they have but little of the light and power of godliness. Surely I need not say that when prayer meetings have fallen into decay, religion has fallen fearfully low. Hearts in which religion lives will make prayer meetings. If they take no interest in seeking and getting up such meetings, they are fearfully lukewarm.

- 5. Christians are lukewarm when they do not naturally care for the salvation of souls. When they feel and express more interest for anything else than for the souls of their friends, you cannot but know they are lukewarm towards Christ. Suppose these room-mates take less interest in each other's souls than in the health and welfare of the body; or suppose a teacher feels less interest for the souls of his class than for their progress in study, what must you think?

Or of a parent who never speaks of the souls of his children? In short, if it be natural to neglect the soul, you know the cause, who does not know that the love of God and of souls forbids this neglect and this unconcern? If religion lives in the heart it is impossible there should be such neglect of souls.

Again, neglect to inquire into the state of religion, reveals the same state of heart. He who never inquires whether there be any revivals, or conversions--who is not interested to know how these matters progress--is certainly lukewarm. If his heart is full of Christ, this will be his theme of chief interest. He will not inquire half so quick whether they have had rain as whether they have God's Spirit. He naturally wants to know whether the cause he loves is prosperous. You may know the man is lukewarm if his heart does not burn to know how religion prospers, and whether souls are turning to the Lord.

- 6. In like manner, persons are proved to be lukewarm if they neglect to pray for a revival and for the salvation of souls. Or if when they pray, it is for themselves only, you must make the same inference. If they do not pour out their hearts for others, but confine their supplications to themselves alone, you may know them to be lukewarm.
- 7. More still, if they pray for themselves in a manner that indicates present impenitence. Sometimes even professors of religion plainly indicate this. If they confess sin, their manner shows they do not repent of it, nor mean to forsake it. Sometimes they merely pray for conviction, or for that which if genuine would be mere conversion. Often after hearing persons pray for a season, I have had occasion to say to them--"If your prayer is answered, you will be converted. That is all you prayed for. Is that what you mean? Your prayer calls for just that, and no more. Instead of praying as inspired men do pouring out the heart of praying for the Zion they love, you are only praying that you become a Christian." Of course I do not allude to the case in which a Christian is speaking in behalf of others, using words in which they may join. In such a case, he will use language which calls for convicting and converting grace. Excepting such cases, you will often notice in prayer meetings that the very manner of their prayers and confessions shows that they are far from God. The very tone and laziness of their prayer shows how lukewarm they are.
- 8. You have another indication in the absence of a spiritual zeal. If you see no zeal for spiritual religion, no deep interest for the progress of Christian experience, no solicitude for that which constitutes the substance and essence of religion, none of that wakeful spiritual sympathy which seems ready to devour truly spiritual conversation--a state of feeling that naturally looks to the Bible for its spiritual food, which loves to talk about prayer and communion with God;--if these things are wanting, you may know that genuine piety runs low. Those professors are lukewarm.

Again, it is no less an indication when there is other zeal, but not a spiritual zeal. Some professed Christians have much zeal for objects in common with infidels, but none for objects in which infidels have no sympathy. It is a zeal of nature, not of grace. Often you observe there is no lack of zeal, but all in other than a right direction. It is the great peculiarity of our age that ungodly men are zealous in certain social reforms. Many of our most zealous reformers are professedly impenitent. Their zeal is such as one may have without any interest in the true spiritual life of the soul. In fact, there is often no God at

all in it. He has no proper recognition of God and no sympathy with His pure benevolence.

- 9. It is remarkable that this zeal manifests itself only against certain forms of sin. By how much the more these reformers zealous in their special reforms, do they lose their interest in religion, their confidence in the Bible, their charity for mankind and for Christian people, their interest in the conversion of souls and in revivals of religion. They have the greatest zeal against certain forms of sin, but against those forms only. They have no zeal against commercial speculation, none against a worldly spirit, nothing to say against neglect of prayer or neglect to save the souls of men. They have no zeal against those terrible forms of sin which have done more mischief in the world than all things else combined. Nothing else that can be named has done so much mischief in the world as lukewarmness. This single sin has done more to curse the world than all the slavery and intemperance of the world ever have. But I cannot pursue this subject just here, it being my present purpose only to show you how to discriminate the lukewarm. I was saying, they may have a zeal of nature originating in natural constitution, instead of a zeal of the heart, originating in divine grace. It shows nature active, but grace dead.
- 10. Yet another indication of lukewarmness is, being blind to the true spiritual state of themselves and others. A deep interest in spiritual life makes persons sharp, eagle-eyed, wide awake to both a spiritual state and to those influences that bear upon it. Such persons cannot be indifferent, and of course will not be blind to any powerful agencies which bear on the great ends they love.
- 11. But this involves my next remarks, viz., that a most decisive indication is a want of concern about the interests of spiritual religion. If they can be remiss and can neglect to make efforts to promote religion and save souls, you may know them to be lukewarm. If this is your own conscious experience, you may know that you are yourself lukewarm.

I wish I had asked you at every point to question yourself and see how each test applies to your own heart and life. You can do this now. Pause and review this entire list of unmistakable indications and see how they apply to your own soul. This is the chief use you can make of these texts -- not to search other people, but to search yourself. I beseech you to do this in all fidelity to your own soul as you value its spiritual health and even life.

- 12. Yet another indication is, reluctance to give money for Christ's cause. Men give their money to the objects their hearts love. When you are called on to give for Christ's cause freely, do you meet the call cheerfully?

Again, every one who has any true religion alive in his heart is in an earnest state of mind. God is in earnest; the great depth and intenseness of His benevolence forbid anything less than this. Angels are in earnest. See them wherever you will in the sacred volume, they are full of the most intense activity and emotion. Saints in heaven are intensely wakeful and active. What did Isaiah see when the upper temple was opened to his astonished vision? Were those holy seraphs asleep? Mark their intense excitement. They cried one to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full

of His glory." The very nature of religion is love, and love arouses and fires the sensibilities as nothing else can do. Its objects are so vast, its scope so broad, its emotional excitement so pure and so intensely delightful, it has in itself all the qualities requisite for becoming naturally more intense than any other class of emotions can be. Hence the zeal of the Christian must be an intense state of mind. But the zeal of lukewarm souls would freeze heaven. Mark it--as cold as the north pole; one would suppose it could never have felt the warmth of the sun of righteousness.

- 13. Now I do not imply that religion consists in excitement, yet such is its blessed nature, and such is the hold it takes upon the soul, that it stirs up the sensibility intensely, and this intense action of the sensibility imparts amazing energy to all the powers of the mind. Hence religion makes everybody intensely active. Mark one of those living Christians,--his very sleep is so full of religion, he seems to sleep on the very borders of wakefulness; he can scarcely find time for needful repose. His mind is supremely interested in this subject. When you hear him talk or pray, you will see that his soul is full of intense feeling and tireless activity in God's work. Can he be full of the Spirit and yet not be intensely alive to all that concerns the kingdom of his Lord?
- 14. If you see one more easily interested on other subjects than on religion, -- if you find it almost impossible to awaken any interest in spiritual things, you may regard it as an unmistakable indication of lukewarmness.
- 15. Where persons do not care to learn about revivals, you must note it as indicating a similar lack of religious life. If they are full of the Spirit of God, you might see them take up a religious paper and run their eye over it for the word "Revival;" omitting everything else, they would look first for the column of revival news, and then for whatever else is most spiritual and tends to bring them nearest to Christ. If you see the opposite of this, you will of course know that that man's interests in religion is only subordinate--not supreme. Suppose you had a brother or a child in California;--how would you watch the steamers, and how anxiously you would run your eye over the list of deaths, and see if the loved name is there! But why this anxious eagerness? You have an interest there. So, if you had an interest in God and in Jesus Christ, you would watch for everything in respect to those objects of your warmest love.

There are some papers, professedly religious, which, show on their very face, either that the men who control their columns are sadly lukewarm themselves, or that they judge the churches to be so, and therefore fill their sheet to suit a fallen, backslidden state of Christian feeling among their readers. For months past I have taken up a religious paper, and read at the head of its first column--"Swiss Scenery"--"Scenes in Switzerland"--&c.,&c. The soul that thirsts for the waters of life is turned off with "Swiss Scenery," and travels, and things that come no nearer the gospel than the religion of nature. I will send that paper back. Why should I try over and over again to feed my soul on such food? And what a state of religion there must be in the country when editors can expect to feed and satisfy Christian people thus! How utterly dry and barren! If the religious readers of such papers depended on them for spiritual food, they must be starved to death!

Again, if people do not kindle up with interest when efforts are to be made for a revival,

you must regard it as an unmistakable indication of lukewarmness. If you are not ready for these efforts, you are certainly in a miserable state.

Now in view of all these indications, will you be so kind to yourself, each of you, as to ask--Is this my state? Can you go on your knees before God and say--O, my God, thou knowest I am not lukewarm. How is this?

- 16. I have still to name one more indication--a life which fails to make the impression on all who see it that religion is your chief business--the one thing needful. For if religion is your chief concern and the thing of deepest interest with you, it is most certain and inevitable that your life will show it. Your life will make the impression on all who know you, that your heart is full of God and of love. The true Christian is a light which cannot be hid. His life will make its impression. He will be known as a zealous man, a self-denying man, as a charitable man, as a holy man--as one who lives in God and God in him.

But I must pass now to say,

III. That a lukewarm state is a most guilty one.

- 1. As a general thing, these professors of religion are enlightened. The fact that they have publicly professed religion evinces this. By how much the greater their light, by how much the greater their guilt.
- 2. It is also a most hypocritical state. Backsliders are hypocrites I do not mean that they have never been converted, but I do mean that they profess towards God what is not true. Their heart and their life belie their profession. They are living, walking hypocrites!
- 3. It is, moreover, a perjured state. That Christian has taken his oath to love and serve God, and has done it under most solemn circumstances--even at the communion table with the symbols of Christ's body and blood in his very hands! What has he sworn? to live for God; to observe all His statutes and all ordinances; often the very terms of his covenant specify attending to all the general meetings of the church, and performing each and all of his duties as a member of the body. Thus he solemnly swears--but thus he never does. At each successive communion season he renews his oath, only to break it again during all the next succeeding interval. He solemnly swore that he would renounce all ungodliness and every worldly lust--that he would walk soberly, righteously and godly in this evil world;--yet how constantly and universally does he violate each point in the solemn affirmation! Do I speak too strongly when I say that this man perjures himself? I am well aware of the technical distinction made in courts of law whereby it is held that there may be much falsehood without perjury--it being essential to perjury that the accused should deliberately swear falsely on a point material to the issue. But let me ask you if the oath of the backslider is not taken deliberately? What could be more so? Let me also ask if it is not to a point most material to the main issue? Surely it is. The very thing he swore he would do is the very thing he does not do. How horrible must such perjury be! Suppose you go into court and you see there a witness taking the stand and swearing to a lie--to what you know is a lie--and to what you know he knows is a lie! Would you not cry out, How awful!--What have we come to! But what is this compared with that we see at the communion table? See

there;--the table is spread, God's holy presence is solemnly invoked--the minister takes the holy Bible, and expounds the nature of the oath to be taken;--then backsliders come forward and solemnly swear to perform all their Christian duties;--solemnly avow their allegiance to Jesus, the crucified--profess supreme love to him, solemnly testify that they believe in his blood as the ground of their forgiveness and that they owe him the devotion a thousand hearts and lives;--they solemnly covenant to walk with their brethren in labor and prayer--to attend the prayer-meetings;--but when the hour comes, he is not there! Another season comes round; he is not there! He almost never comes. It is a very rare thing that he even pretends to do any one of the many overt tangible things embraced in his vow. He does indeed come to meeting occasionally on the Sabbath. But this costs him no particular self-denial. On the Sabbath there is nothing else he can do. He may not work his farm, or drive his trade, or open his store. So on the Sabbath he will come to the house of God. But really, and in the spirit of it, he breaks every material point of his solemn covenant. At the next communion he is ready as ever to renew it; the communion season once past, he is ready to trample it under his heedless foot again! Is not this a most guilty state?

- 4. Still further, it is guilty because it is a most injurious state. It does infinite mischief. Nothing so discourages a minister as to be shut up to the necessity of reaching the impenitent over the heads of backsliders. He preaches that religion is the chief concern; they deny it. He says, it is and should be the principal business; they give him the lie. He says, religion gives its possessor peace; they reply--that is all a lie. He holds forth that Jesus has died for sinners, and those who are bought with his blood must devote their whole life and heart to his service; they reply--we don't hold, in practice, to any such things. He preaches to sinners that the hearts of Christians are bleeding with sympathy for them; they can very promptly say--that is utterly false, for we know better. Let the minister say what he will to paint the glories of heaven, or portray the woes of hell; to urge the need and the value of gospel salvation, or to exhibit the power and the reality of religion;--the backslider rises before him and gives the lie to all he can say. Alas, it is almost a hopeless task to preach so! For to make the matter still worse--these professed Christians are supposed to know from experience. They have tried it and have gone back to the world again. The minister may have a good theory, but it don't work in practice, and there is the proof. Or he may have some professional motive for such preaching; but, say they, do we not know that the proof of these things must lie in experience!

Hence, when backsliders come upon the stand and swear that not one word of God's can be believed--that all His promises are a humbug--that all the time prospects and hopes of the young convert are blasted, and he must needs return to the world again for life and joy; how fearfully injurious must this be!

- 5. It must be most injurious, because it hardens sinners in the worst way, and begets in them a contempt for religion. They see those who profess it go to the communion table and carefully maintain the forms of religion; but then they also see these same persons perjure themselves on all these vital points of their profession. They know that these professors have no deep interest in religion--no feeling about it; they see enough to convince them that their profession is nothing better than a blasphemous humbug. When they see masses of those who have made the solemn professions, absenting themselves from prayer-meetings, and really doing nothing to promote the objects they profess to love so deeply, is it any wonder that they are hardened? Is it

strange that they are made skeptics? I know, and everybody who examines the subject must know, that the backsliding of professed Christians does more to beget skepticism than all the writings of infidels. I have seen places--I have been called to preach in places, where the conduct of professors has begotten an almost universal skepticism, so that the very foundations of Bible truth had to be laid over again. Nothing could be done in preaching the gospel till you had gone back to first principles; till you had rolled baleful influence of so much backsliding and apostasy, and shown people that they must examine the Bible for themselves and on their own responsibility--let apostates believe it as they might.

- 6. Backsliding does more injury to souls than any thing else, because it leads to false hopes. Men will form their notions on what religion is from the life of his professors. If this life believes religion, giving a false view of it, multitudes are deluded. Thus the backslider does much to confirm both himself and others in a false hope. Suppose a pastor becomes lukewarm, and that then his deacons also become lukewarm, their life and spirit still remain the general standard of piety. The masses, thinking themselves as good as the deacons and the minister, feel very much at ease in their state, and so go down in vast numbers to the depths of hell.

It is expected that young converts will be led by older and leading minds. The latter virtually say--We are older and have more experience than you; it befits you to follow rather than to lead us; modesty and humility are altogether becoming in the young. Thus backsliders throw themselves directly in the way of young converts. Twice within a few years have I heard ministers say--"O, if I could only take these young converts away by themselves, how easily could I train them up for God and form in them habits of earnest Christian activity. But now, what can I do? If the older, backslidden members are not kept foremost, they will become chafed, restive, and perhaps will wound the feelings of the young converts; while if the converts are kept back and under their influence, they will be frozen to death. If we could only take these young converts along as they now wish to go, what a noble church they would make, and what living, working Christians?"

Again, backsliding is fraught with mischief because it bewilders and stumbles inquirers. When they see professed Christians absent from church-meetings, and meetings for prayer, full of worldly interest and conversation, how fearfully does it retard God's work of grace in their souls!

- 7. Backsliding is fraught with guilt and unbelief because it naturally and greatly disheartens laboring Christians. Nothing discourages them more. Often have I heard such laborers mourn over the mischievous influence of backsliders, and say--How can we bear up against it? We cannot live so! We shall die!

IV. Explain the threatening--" I will spew thee out of my mouth."

Backsliding grieves Christ. What could grieve Him more? You may judge of His feelings by the language He uses towards them--"I would thou wert cold or hot; because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth." Nauseated with a thing so loathsome, He will throw them off with unutterable loathing!

V. Show that its folly is no less great than its sin.

- 1. It gratifies the devil. What could they do to please him more! He would rather have a few backsliders in a church than scores of infidels and Universalists! What can infidelity do in the midst of a living Christianity? If his people lived religion, the minister would never need to open his mouth to defend the divine authority of the Bible. If there were a living, breathing, speaking Christianity abroad among the people, they would not need one word of preaching to withstand infidelity. Yet how common it is for a lukewarm professor to rebuke and deplore the prevalent infidelity of the times; when it is a fact that all the infidels of his town do not work so fearful an influence against religion as he and his associate backsliders!
- 2. The Bible describes this class of people in most affecting and forceful terms. They are "clouds without water," clouds indeed--things that promise water and raise high hopes; but they bring no rain. We have had striking illustrations of this during the past weeks. Clouds have arisen upon the face of the sky--full of promise they were, and every man looked hopefully, perhaps confidently, to see them roll up their dark volume and pour out their crystal floods; but alas, the winds are up and tear the clouds to pieces; and we get not one drop of rain! So of the religion of these backsliders. At the communion table they renew their solemn oath; they seem to do it in all solemnity, and people say--now we may surely expect a religious life; now we shall have prayer and zeal and faith and labor;--but alas, the wind gets into that hopeful cloud! The spirit of worldliness is still there, and it scatters those hopeful clouds to the four quarters of the heavens! They are clouds without rain, carried to and fro by tempests.
- 3. Still varying the figure, the Bible describes them as "wells without water." We can begin to understand this. At every corner you hear the complaint, "My well is dry; my cistern has failed me; can you give me a pitcher full of water?" So in the backslidden church you might take your empty pitcher all around for a few drops of the water of life, and alas you find none!

How impressive these Bible figures! The Bible was written in a country subject to great and fearful droughts; and hence when we come to experience similar droughts we are thrown at once into circumstances to feel the force of those figures. Suppose yourself in an eastern desert; the whole caravan are famishing for want of water; they come to the wells of the country--no water there; after long marches and many raised hopes, they reach the spot--only to be once more disappointed. Alas, when the troubled sinner goes round among backslidden Christians, holding forth his empty pitcher for some precious drops of the water of life--and finds none, he understands the force of this figure!

- 4. Backsliders betray Christ with a kiss. Following Judas, they come to his table with fair promise,--they go away to blast those raised hopes in bitterest disappointment.

Look at Judas. He had been at the communion table; the solemn Passover had been enacted; he rises hastily--slips away to the Jewish officers,--gets a band of soldiers, and guides them stealthily to the place where he knew Jesus was wont to retire for prayer. See him coming! His men fall back and he advances; as if glad to welcome his Lord again, he rushes up to embrace him crying, "Hail Master," and kisses him. Jesus rebukes the traitor--"Judas," said he, "betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" So does each

backslider. He comes to the communion table to greet his Lord with a kiss; then turns away to betray him!

- 5. By another Scripture comparison, they are "wolves in sheep's clothing;"--clad like a sheep, but really a wolf. They look so fair, no one fears them; the ewes will almost invite them to lie down among their tender lambs--but how long before he has those tender ones in his bloody jaws!
- 6. There is yet another illustration, not from scripture, yet too pertinent to be omitted. Along the coast it is common for reefs of rocks to project into the sea. To lessen the dangers to the navigator, especially in storms, lighthouses are erected to indicate the harbors which vessels may safely make in a storm. Now there are human beings so lost to humanity and so full of Satan, that they build fires on a stormy night to allure vessels upon those dreadful rocks, that they may revel in the plunder! The fog is dense, the spray thick, the night dark and the mariner cannot distinguish these lure-fires from the genuine lighthouse; so on he comes, bearing down upon those roaring breakers! The wreckers are on the look-out; they see the lights of the vessel as she bounds over the billows; they hear the last fearful crash as she strikes, and as the wails and shrieks rise above the roar of the storm--but they are ready for their work. What is it to them that human beings are dashed upon the rocks of ocean! They want plunder--at any cost!
- 7. Backsliders are spiritual wreckers. They set mountain fires for the mariner. They say--We are spiritual guides; we will lead you in the way of life. See them in all the solemnity of an oath, professing to live and labor as Christians, and to lead the multitudes to God!--Whither do they in fact lead them! See the man come up to the communion table in presence of the ungodly. Hear him; he says, "I am a Christian; mark my Christianity and take it as your model. I am in the way to heaven; follow me." They follow till he has lured them along and dashed them on the rocks of damnation! Let him not say--"I ask no man to follow me; I can take no responsibility for their being misguided;"--the fact is, his very profession does the mischief; his very profession proclaims--"This is a Christian life, and whoever will follow me shall reach heaven." So he need do nothing more than be a Christian backslider, and he becomes a spiritual wrecker, luring souls upon the rocks of spiritual death.

But again; backsliding is great folly as well as great guilt. The backslider gains nothing. His life is utterly inconsistent, odious, loathsome; indeed the Bible describes it as insupportably odious and disgusting. Christ says--"I will spew thee out of my mouth." He cannot hear them, and will quick relieve himself of the dreadful nausea! Some of you know what it is to drink tepid water to produce nausea and vomiting, and you can appreciate the force of this figure of speech.

What is there more loathsome than fair professions and a false life? I have suffered but too much from this very thing myself. Many a man begins with saying I am Mr. Finney's friend; I esteem Mr. Finney highly;--but--but--I cannot approve his measures--I cannot endorse his course." So having begun with gaining public confidence, they end by using it all to injure me and my usefulness in the worst possible way. They come up to salute with a kiss--and then give the fatal stab! This is the surest way to do mischief. This is the backslider's course. He says--See how I love the dear Savior! Then he goes his way and

lives out the utmost dishonor against His name. Some writer has said -- "Protect me from my friends; I can withstand my enemies myself." No wonder Christ should feel so, as to His backslidden people.

REMARKS.

1. This course is a most deceptive, because a most hardening process. You may take any number of infidels or Universalists, people of most irreligious, prayerless character, place them under the same preaching and the same influences for conversion with an equal number of backsliders, and none of the former will be converted to one of the latter. Where did infidels or Universalists ever resist faithful instruction and warning, as backsliders have done in this congregation? The reason is, backsliders deceive themselves to their fearful hardening and sudden destruction. Hear what Christ said to the Laodiceans -- "I will spew thee out of my mouth." So he did. He warned; they repented not; and now their candlestick is removed from its place. For long ages past, the Mussulman has muttered his blasphemies on the very spot where those churches stood. Yet who heeds the warning!

2. The absence of religious zeal is scarcely considered a sin. If you speak to people about their great sin, they look up in surprise and say--what! whom have I cheated? Whom have I overreached or slandered? They will tell you of David's great sin, of the awful dishonor which he brought upon God. True, David's sin was a horrible affair; doubtless his heart felt it most deeply; but he did not begin to dishonor God as the backsliders of our day are doing it. He was in the main a good man, and a laborious and useful Christian; and all the nation knew it. The closing scene of that sad transaction shows it. A humble prophet could come to the lofty monarch of Israel and pierce him through and through with the arrows of convicting truth, and even be received gratefully. His repentance and future life told the story. From his smitten heart flowed strains of sorrowing penitence and holy resolve all along down the history of the church to this day! Reproach him for dishonoring Christianity? His case is not to be named in comparison with modern backsliders.

3. It is most remarkable that churches now tolerate backsliders, while Christ spewed them out of his mouth. Angels know them as outcasts, and pass them by; but the church retains them, and allows them still to come to her holy table with mummeries and lies. They go on, swearing falsely, full of levity and worldly mindedness. Do you think this is saying too much against them? The very thought shows where you are.

4. "Whom I love, says Christ, I rebuke;" "Behold, he says, I stand at the door and knock"--ready to enter and to bless. I come even to your house and to your heart; if you will but hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and all the past shall be forgiven and forgotten. We shall be friends again as ever, and you shall have all the precious tokens of my love.

Who of you stand here today convicted of backsliding and lukewarmness--having these indications manifest in your spirit and life--saying, My peace of mind is gone; I have lost my light, lost my way. And are you willing to acknowledge it? Will you confess it to yourself--and confess it also before earth and heaven? Many know they are in a lukewarm state, yet would as soon die as confess it. Are you convinced of your sin in this matter? Then "be zealous and repent." Nothing short of earnest zeal to repent will suffice. Shrink not back in cold unbelief. Hear the tender appeal--"Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore

my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

The Christian's Genuine Hope

Lecture XV
October 27, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--1 John 3:3: "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure."

The connection of this passage shows what its meaning must be. With admiring wonder the apostle calls our attention to that love bestowed on us by the Father in calling us sons of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called sons of God!" This is a present blessing. "Behold, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The thing known and present is our sonship -- that we are the sons of God; the thing future and not yet known pertains to what we shall be. This will come to light when Christ shall appear; because, then, seeing Christ as He is, we shall certainly, by the very laws of mind, and in accordance with the divine plan, be like Him. This is the thing we hope for. This precisely constitutes the Christian's hope -- that he shall see Christ as He is, and be eternally like Him.

1. In discussing this subject, I must first define the psychological nature of hope. It is compounded of two elements -- desire and expectation. Plainly there must be desire, for an event we dread and fear, we cannot say we hope for. For example, death. The mind that dreads death cannot be said to hope for it, however certain that it must come. So there must also be expectation, at least some degree of it; for no man hopes for what he knows or believes to be impossible.

It should be farther remarked that desire, as an element of hope, should be taken in its broad and comprehensive sense, as implying more than a mere action of the sensibility. It should involve such a state of mind as calls the will into action. The man not only wishes and wants, but is willing to work for what he honestly hopes to attain.

2. Hope is always a condition of effort to secure its object, and a powerful stimulus to such effort. The object must be desired and chosen; else, it is impossible for the mind to make efforts to attain it. The will must be fixed and fully purposed to secure the object, if possible; else, no proper exertion will follow. And there must be also expectation; otherwise, the mind will not put forth its energies. A man cannot exert himself sanely and wisely for a thing he knows or even believes to be impossible and not to be at all

expected. The object must be deemed possible to be attained; and there must be at least some degree of expectation of its attainment. These elements are not only the conditions, but are the natural stimulus to effective effort. In fact, they necessitate effort. When you apprehend an event or result as a great good, and are led to regard it as attainable, you must of necessity put forth efforts to attain it. This is only the result of a fixed law of mind.

3. A specific hope must secure a corresponding course of life. This follows by necessity from the principles above stated. There are many specific objects of desire and expectation; consequently there must be a great many specific objects of hope. For example, you may hope to get an education. If so, you set your will upon it. Your hope, in proportion to its strength, stimulates your effort. So of wealth, fame, office, honor; when the elements of hope are present, your efforts are called forth, and you try to attain the hoped for object. So I might go over a vast field, showing that hope invariably does and must produce special effort.

4. The Christian hope is one specific form, and the general laws of mind compel us to apply the principles above explained, to this form also. In fact our text is a distinct affirmation of this sentiment, and gives it a universal application. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself." The apostle positively affirms that every instance of this hope will be manifested by the appropriate effort. How can it be otherwise? The object before the mind is the being like Christ. You hope to be like Him when you shall see Him as He is. Now you can see at once that this hope must beget a constant endeavor to become like Christ now. For what is this hope, and what does it imply? Study this point with care. A true hope of heaven implies a realization of what heaven is; for a man deceives himself if he thinks he has a Christian hope and yet does not rightly apprehend what heaven is. I knew a lady who long time thought she had wanted to go to heaven, and had enjoyed, as she supposed, a Christian hope. But in process of time truth broke in upon her mind and she began to see, as she had not done before, the holiness of heaven. At length the subject came fully before her mind as it were in a blaze of heaven's own light; and she said to her husband, "You know I have long been hoping for heaven, and have supposed myself in a measure prepared for it; but my mind is entirely changed. I do not want to go to heaven; they are so holy there!"

It is most evident that you must have a deep sympathy with heaven, its society, and its employments; else you cannot by any means have a Christian hope. The Christian hope, is the hope of being like Christ; and for this, you must understand His character -- must see its excellence, and the possibility of being like Him; this will impel you to labor to be transformed into His likeness.

REMARKS.

1. Many have no just idea of the Christian hope. They talk of hoping that they are Christians, as if this were the Christian hope. They hope they are converted, and they take this to be the hope of the Christian; but obviously they have no just conception of what the Christian hope is. Theirs is not a Christian hope, for it has not the right object. They hope they shall escape punishment; they hope they shall not be doomed to hell; but this is by no means the true end of a Christian hope. And furthermore,

they have not the right expectation of attaining the true end; they do not expect to become like Christ; so that both elements of the Christian hope are wanting.

2. A good hope is of priceless value. It is the very secret of holy living. One never lives holy while in despair of attaining to the image of Christ. No man lives holy unless he has the conception of holiness and of heaven. On the other hand a true hope fires the soul with its desire and expectation, and sets it upon mightily energizing to attain the desired object. Hence this is the secret of holy living. I do not say it will produce a holy life without the aid of the Spirit of God; but I do say that the Spirit cannot produce a holy life without this hope. The agency of this hope as a means and an instrumentality seems naturally indispensable.

Without hope none can attain holiness. You cannot attain sanctification without first having the hope of attaining it, and then being stimulated by this hope to make appropriate efforts. Hence, you must expect to attain as a condition of attaining.

3. A good hope naturally secures its object. For example a young man hopes to become a good minister. What will be the effect of this hope? First, he will get before his mind the true ideal of a good minister. He cannot intelligently hope for such a result without this ideal. The very ideal is a first and necessary step towards the attainment of the end. Then, his hope will set him upon efforts. It will make him ever wakeful and ever earnest in the attainment of his object. His hope becomes both condition and stimulus of attainment.

4. A false hope must and will reveal itself in many ways. It will reveal itself by its obviously mistaken end. Suppose it to be the common hope of being a Christian. A man has a hope, he says; you ask him what he hopes for, and he tells you he hopes he is a Christian. This man, perhaps, does not at all conceive what constitutes eternal life. He has never thought of it as being an eternal likeness to Jesus Christ, and an eternal sympathy with Him. On the contrary, he thinks of it only, or at least chiefly, as an escape from hell. Now, by natural consequence, this hope will reveal itself as we so often see it -- no energizing after holiness -- no laboring to be prepared to live forever with Christ; but anything else, rather than this. Yet who does not see that the result of the Christian hope must be a most earnest preparation for the employments of heaven?

A young lady of my acquaintance received a proposal of marriage. She frankly confessed her interest in the proposal, for really she felt the highest esteem for the gentleman who made it. It was indeed this very esteem, coupled with a deep sense of her own deficiencies, which led her to reply -- I am not prepared now to become your wife, because I cannot be to you all that a wife ought to be. I can accept your proposal only on the condition that it shall not be consummated for some time to come. Her condition was accepted, and the engagement made. Then the young lady entered upon an era of hope. She thenceforth expected to become his wife, and earnestly desired to become all that the wife of such a man should be. What must be the effect of this hope on her mind? Obviously, it puts her upon most earnest efforts to make all those improvements in her habits and character which she is conscious she needs. Now this illustration touches the very point in hand. The Christian says -- I must be prepared to dwell with Christ. I must be in readiness for those Divine joys and employments which constitute heaven. The heart is set upon it, and the assured hope of it inspires intense efforts. Such a hope will make a Christian avoid everything that can displease Christ. Suppose that young woman, betrothed,

yet delaying marriage with a man she highly respects and warmly loves, should nevertheless pay no attention to preparing herself for her anticipated married life; what would you think of her? The supposition is incredible. The things supposed could never all co-exist in a sane mind. The very laws of mind forbid their actual co-existence. So of the Christian. It is utterly impossible that a hope of being like Christ, and of seeing Him as He is, should fail to quicken the heart to realize the very result hoped for.

5. Eternal life is nothing else but sympathy with Christ and its consequences. Becoming like Christ in spirit and temper, you have the life that dwells in Him. Your soul is essentially transformed into His moral image.

Some of you have known the personal history of a somewhat distinguished editor of a religious paper, who, after editing it for a season, relapsed into a career of scandalous vice, and finally died a horrible death. It is said that his religious hope, and its action upon his spiritual state, were just such as I have been representing as the spurious hope. He only hoped for an imaginary heaven -- not for the fitness which the real heaven requires -- not that he might see Christ as He is, or be like Him. It operated on his mind thus. When his hope became strong, he became careless, gave himself up to the power of temptation, and relapsed into shameful sin. Then, conscience roused itself; he became alarmed; his hope faded away; he set himself to his religious works, preaching and praying, till he regained his hope, and then fell back again into the same careless and prayerless state as before, only each time a little worse. Then, convicted of sin, he aroused himself once more -- went over the same routine, vibrating perpetually from a delusive hope to utter licentiousness of heart and life, until at last death found him, and terminated the scene. Strange he did not see that such a hope revealed at once its utter rottenness! If his had been the true Christian hope, its very nature would have rendered it impossible that he should relapse into sin under its influence. People do not backslide because they have a Christian hope, but because their hope is not genuine. They lose sight of the true object of a Christian hope. Their hope is radically spurious because it has a mistaken object.

6. A good hope must reveal itself in holy living. What can an unsanctifying hope be good for? It can only deceive and curse its possessor. A hope that makes a man careless and prayerless -- what is it good for? Just nothing at all -- save to ruin his soul. Such a hope is sheer presumption. So far from being any title to heaven, it is certainly a lure to hell. It is a nuisance to him and to everybody else. If his hope leads him into sin, it is the greatest curse he can have upon him. It is a nuisance to all his acquaintances. The existence of false hopes in the church, is one of the greatest evils in the world. They beget a vast amount of spurious religion. They lead men naturally and of necessity, to misconceptions of what true religion is. By false hopes, as I now use the phrase, I mean those that do not purify the heart. This is the certain mark of their spurious nature.

7. In the face of our text, and in defiance of the very nature of the case, many persons will hold on to an unsanctifying hope. Despite of the Bible, regardless of the very nature of the Christian hope, both of which forbid them to suppose their hope to be good for anything, they yet persist in the most confident expectation that all will be well. They will even regard any man as their enemy who shall try to tear their hope away, in order to save their soul. It is the greatest presumption possible to hold on to a hope which fails to renew the heart unto holiness.

Many are too proud to confess their hope to be false, when they inwardly know it to be so. They can see that they are surely deceived -- but alas, the pride of their heart rebels against any confession of the humiliating truth. I knew the case of a lady who had been a professor of religion for eight years, and had been regarded as a good Christian, but being present on one occasion where a sermon was preached on the holiness of God, the truth came home to her mind with great power. She sunk upon her seat apparently helpless. The people brought her out at the close of service; I spoke to her, but she was quite unable to make any reply. After being in this state of overwhelming conviction and mental conflict for sixteen hours, she came out into the full light of the Savior's countenance, and then told us how her mind had been exercised. She said, "I say that I had never known God. When you described His holiness, I saw that I had not the least degree of it myself, and indeed, that I did not wish to have any. I knew then that my character was utterly unlike God's. Then all my Christian hope perished. My whole soul drew back from God, as if it refused to have anything more to do with a Being so holy and pure. Then followed convictions of my own sin and guilt -- a fearful conflict -- until grace triumphed and my soul bowed.

Such experiences are not uncommon. Persons who indulge the Christian hope, do not know how holy God is -- have no just appreciations of His character, and therefore do not strive to become like God in this respect. Under this delusion they live, and thus they die, with no suspicion of their mistake until they open their eyes in hell. I have before my mind another case -- that of a man who was altogether a leader in the church, and very intimate with the minister who frequented the place. On one occasion, as I was at his house, he asked me what I should think of a man who, day after day, prayed for the Holy Ghost, yet never received it. I replied, I should conclude that he prayed from wrong motives. But, continued he, suppose his motive was, to be happy, what then? That would be altogether selfish, I replied. What motive should he have? he asked. I answered, the same that David had when he prayed for pardoning and restoring grace; "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." "O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." He turned suddenly away -- said nothing; but, several hours afterward, he came to me and confessed that he turned away, mad at the truth I had presented, and deeply offended that God should require such self-renunciation. He saw himself in his real nakedness, but felt for some time that he had rather die than have it known that he had been deceived. At length he passed safely over that point where so many make shipwreck and are lost.

Backsliders always have false hopes, never a true one, as the very fact of their backsliding shows. If a man backslides, his hope must be bad, for he could not backslide if his hope were "an anchor to his soul, sure and steadfast" -- if it were of the scriptural stamp, "a hope that maketh not ashamed." A hope under the influence of which he would "purify himself, even as Christ is pure." The backslider has only the hope that he shall be converted, and this only serves to confirm him in his state of backsliding/ just as the sinner's hope of being one day converted, prevents him from being converted now. If you can tear away this hope, you may save his soul. So, if you can tear away the backslider's hope, you may save his soul; else, it is certainly lost beyond hope. The very idea of backsliding is inconsistent with a gospel hope -- such as our text describes.

What is your hope? Some of you hope for an education; some of you for fame; some for respectable connections in society; but have you the Christian's hope? If you have, then your heart is set upon being like Christ. Is it so? Is your heart thus set? Does your hope beget most earnest striving to be like

Christ? You have some religious hope of some sort -- but is it a true Christian's hope? Many are so entirely in the dark, they hold on to a hope, supposing it all right, when, in the light of the Bible, there is not the first element of a Christian's hope in it. Their hope is their curse and their ruin.

We are compelled to conclude that there are but few of all the professed Christians of our world who have the true Christian's hope. I do not say, that there are but few real Christians -- taken absolutely; but I do say their number is small relatively to the great mass who think themselves Christians. There are but few relatively, whose life and spirit show their hopes to be scriptural -- but few who are really purifying themselves, even as Christ is pure.

No good hope can be kept secret. Some people talk of having a secret hope, and speak of others as having a secret hope. The fact is, a hope that can be kept secret, shows itself to be poor and vain. For if it were a good hope, it would lead its possessor to purify himself. No man can throw the energies of his being into the struggle after Christian purity, and still keep his religion a secret. The world will know him; Christian brethren will feel the warmth of his heart.

Some of you have a hope, which, instead of leading you on to a holy life, makes you quiet and easy in your sins. It does not tend at all to make you purify yourself from sin, but on the contrary, it makes you careless and dead in your sins. You know you live in sin, yet you have a hope that you shall be saved at last. Is it not a fact on the very face of it, that your hope is bad, and that your soul is on the way to hell? It has precisely the opposite influence to what it should have; it works more sin rather than more holiness; it fits you for hell -- not for heaven; yet you hold on to it as if it were your very life. Do you not see that it must inevitably drown your soul in destruction? It helps you to live careless and prayerless. It impels you after everything else but Christ. Surely you must see that it is leading you down to hell! Unless you abandon it as a nuisance, a curse and a lie, you can never be saved! Put it away as an abomination that is leading your soul down to hell! Why not put it away? What good can it do you? You may just as well have a good hope, in a glorious gospel -- a hope that shall purify your heart, and lift you upward to heaven. Why will you have the counterfeit, while the good coin can be had just as well and as cheap? Why cleave to delusion and death, when the truth is free, and eternal life in Christ comes without money and without price?

The Primitive Prayer-Meeting

Lecture XVI

November 22, 1854

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Acts 1:14: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

In the context we have an account of Christ's last interview with his disciples. They had assembled at his request; he met them, "spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;" commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, assuring them that they "should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence;" and then was taken up from their sight. They returned to Jerusalem, went into an upper room, and there "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." These, in brief, are the circumstances of this wonderful prayer-meeting.

I propose to notice,

I. The object of this prayer-meeting;

II. Its characteristics;

III. Its results.

I. The object of this prayer-meeting.

The special object of this meeting was to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit upon themselves and the world. It had been promised, even from Abraham, down the long line of holy seers, that in connection with the advent of Christ, the Spirit should be given. Christ reminded his disciples of this great promise and bade them tarry in Jerusalem and wait for its fulfillment. He had given them their great commission, to go forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; but he would have them plainly understand that they could do nothing without his Spirit, and therefore they must by all means wait in Jerusalem till they had received this anointing of the Father. That they might the better understand this baptism he referred to John's mission and work, saying--"John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." That baptism was only a type; this was to be the very thing symbolized.

This meeting to pray for the descent of the Spirit continued not less than ten days. From the Passover at which Christ suffered, he met with them on various occasions during forty days; then ascended to heaven. The feast of Pentecost was, as its name imports, just fifty days after the Passover. The interval from the ascension to the Pentecost, ten days, was the duration of this remarkable prayer-meeting; for we are told that when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were still "all with one accord in one place."

II. Its characteristics.

- 1. Of the characteristics of this meeting, the first to be noticed is that the brethren and sisters were all present. This is a prominent peculiarity, and deserves distinct and special notice. The sacred historian is careful to call attention to the fact. "Peter stood up among them, the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty." All the eleven were there, "with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren." Not one could be spared. What, suppose ye, Christ would have thought, if only two or three had come, and the rest had been too indifferent or too much engrossed in other business to be there? They did not allow any other

business to detain them. They honored God enough to meet on his special call and to stay till the object of the meeting was accomplished.

- 2. They were all interested in the object. This is manifest in the fact that they all came and all remained together so long, and indeed until the object was attained. Not only were they all there, but all held on through those long sessions. This shows them really in earnest.
- 3. They expected the promised blessing. They knew Christ had promised it, and they believed his promise. Of course their faith became a strong and definite expectation.
- 4. Yet again, they were united. Over and over again, we are told they were all with one accord in one place. United in the one desire to obtain this great blessing, and of one heart in regard to the motives which led them to pray, there was the most entire unanimity, as if the whole company had but one heart, and that were strong and true in its impulse and purposes.
- 5. They were united in fraternal confidence. There is no hint of any loss or lack of confidence in each other. Hence they could edify each other. Their communion of soul was deep and precious.
- 6. They persevered. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." They were instant in their prayer until the object was gained. They could not think of giving up and abandoning their effort before the blessing came. They said as Jacob in his wrestlings, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." What could they do without the Spirit! Besides, Christ had distinctly told them not to go until the blessing came.
- 7. I said that the brethren and sisters both were there. this was contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Jews then, and indeed is so to this day. They do not admit women to sit with themselves in their holy places, in their seasons of worship. They are allowed to occupy only the galleries, from which they may look down as spectators, not being expected to join as associate worshippers. In public acts of devotion they might have no part. Not so under the gospel. In Christ there must be no distinction between bond and free, male and female. All were to be one in him. All their old Jewish prejudices were discarded. This was a most important fact in the constitution of the Christian church. Until Christ came, no such meeting of brethren and sisters on the same level had been known. The particularity with which this circumstance is recorded, shows that a new era had opened. No partition wall is henceforth to thrust the female sex into the court of the woman, or into the distant galleries; all sexes are counted alike as brethren in Christ Jesus.
- 8. Observe also that there is no sectarian spirit or party spirit or party strife among them. No party prejudice was there; all were true Christian brethren. The division of the Christian church into parties and sects, now so great an evil, was then unknown. Men were not then stickling for little things, were not building up new denominations on a basis so unworthy as a mere difference in forms or even in the forms of a form. The controversies of later days about ordinances had not yet begun to distract and rend the body of Christ. Nor was there then any strife for leadership. Diotrephes and his sect had not then appeared in the Christian church.

You may think me censorious in having intimated that the ambition of leadership makes

sects. I wish there was no truth in this intimation. But who does not know it to be but too sadly true!

- 9. Moreover, there was no caviling against the truth, or against judiciously proposed measures. Suspicion had no room in their kindred bosoms. They had no disposition to resist each other's prayer; there were none to whisper--I am not edified with this brother's prayer, or by the prayer of that sister. All with one accord, as well as all in one place! this must have been a charming season--a meeting in which loving hearts blended in holy sympathy.
- 10. It was, finally, a deeply earnest meeting. No apathetic souls were there, lagging and hanging as dead weights on the general heart of the assembly. All seemed to take as equally deep and warm interest in the great supplications they were convened to pour out before their ascended Lord for the great blessing of the Christian dispensation.

III. Results.

In brief, these are soon told. Three thousand were converted under one short sermon. The Holy Ghost fell on the disciples with great power, and from them the blessing diffused itself on every hand to the thousands who believed. The little band found themselves launched forth upon the greatest enterprise ever undertaken by mortals; and withal, drawn into such relations of faith and sustaining strength towards God and their ascended Savior as had never been realized on earth before. The conversion of the world to Jesus had fairly begun and the mission of the Spirit was opened.

REMARKS.

This is doubtless to be taken as a model prayer-meeting--substantially, in its spirit and leading circumstances, what a prayer-meeting ought to be. Why not? There is nothing here that should not be in all prayer-meetings for objects of similar importance.

1. Yet who can fail to notice that most prayer-meetings are nearly the reverse of this, in all their characteristic features? What do you see now in prayer-meetings appointed to pray for the conversion of sinners? Only a little handful of Christians present; the rest of the church pouring contempt on the very call for a meeting! It is easy to see that this must be regarded by Christ as a real insult. A meeting is called, yet but few have interest enough to attend! What would you think if, a notice being given out for a meeting at our church to invite some distinguished personage to come and visit us--say LaFayette, or Kossuth, or some one to whom the nation were under the very greatest obligations; the call for a meeting is given out; it appears in the daily papers; but when the hour arrives, only a very few are present! The people do not come! Suppose this distinguished stranger is informed how thin this meeting is; will he come? Will he not deem the very call an insult? So when meetings are appointed to invite the Lord Jesus, and almost none attend, will he come? Nay, verily; why should he come? There is no unanimity in the invitation. The understanding is they are not unanimous in inviting him to come. You will say, perhaps, that you did not intend your absence to mean just that. You did not mean to say that you did not want the Savior to come. You had your special reasons for being absent. You had an excuse; but do you think such excuses would avail in the case of any distinguished personage? Suppose the meeting had been called to invite General Washington; but very few attend; yet they send on to him their excuses for non-attendance; they tell him they were all very

busy; some had sickness in their family, and some were taking care of various home concerns; they really felt the highest respect for him, &c., &c. Would their apologies avail? Would it not be regarded as a downright insult to ask so great a man to come among us, and yet in a called meeting to invite him, have only a mere handful present?

Now does not this apply in the case of prayer to God? Indeed it does. The prayer-meeting is specially called for the purpose of inviting him to come among us. It is important to know who want him to come; how many they are; and how much they desire his coming. The call of a meeting is the proper way to test and determine all these points. If the result shows that but very few care enough about it to even appear at the meeting, what can be expected but a failure in the great object of inducing him to make us a visit? Suppose the meeting at the day of Pentecost and during those previous days had been very thin, would the blessing have descended? Who can suppose it would?

We may have a prayer-meeting and urge the very strongest reasons for the descent of God's Spirit; but what avails it--if we are only a small minority of those who are in the church?

2. How much worse still is the case in our modern prayer-meeting if even those who do attend are manifestly not by any means earnest in prayer! How often we see this to be undoubtedly the case. They do not press their plea for a visitation of mercy from on high. They do not struggle long and earnestly as those praying souls did in the first great primitive prayer-meeting. These pleas and prayers are as different from those as can well be imagined. Let no one wonder that these movements are so unavailing!

3. Prayer is wont to be offered now with very little expectation. So great a lack of expectation denotes lack of faith in God, and therefore must fail to please him.

4. People think they cannot take time for continuous prayer. To keep up a prayer-meeting a whole week, is quite too much to think of! They have by no means brought their views up to the point of praying till the blessing comes. They do not feel earnest enough, nor are they sufficiently pressed with a sense of want to make this seem a small thing compared with the greatness of the blessing sought. They think they do well if they pray a little at one meeting per week, keep up one weekly meeting, and spend even that mostly in something else than prayer. What can be expected from such efforts?

5. Perhaps there is not unanimity enough, nor brotherly love enough to sustain even one weekly prayer-meeting. This is the case in many churches and in many neighborhoods. Is it so here in some portion of this great church?

6. Even where general prayer-meetings can be kept up, and are so, yet neighborhood prayer-meetings fall through. Alienations of feeling arise among brethren and sisters; bickerings, bad blood and bad words are there; they lose confidence in each other, and cannot pray together! How awful! How different from the spirit of the day of Pentecost! There, all the assembled brethren and sisters were of one heart and one soul! The tears were scarcely dry on the cheek of the penitent Peter; Thomas had not recovered from the deep mortification, shame and grief of his unbelief, yet even these feelings did not stand in the way of the most entire union of heart and soul in prayer for the great promised blessing.

7. Yet in how many churches you are astonished to find the prayer-meeting abandoned; the hearts of brethren soured and alienated; confidence almost gone, and worse than all the rest, few left to mourn over this deplorable state of Zion. You may find, here and there, a brother or a sister mournfully asking, "What shall we do for a prayer-meeting in our neighborhood? There is not brotherly love and confidence enough here to sustain one." You would be astonished to know how often this is the case. Sometimes a family prayer-meeting drops to pieces in the same way. Alienation in some form arises; they lose confidence in each other's prayers, and interest in each other's welfare; and, of course, they cease to pray with and for each other. Under such influences, Christians are not interested in each other's prayers, and are not led onward and edified by mutual prayer. Where alienation exists, and mutual sympathy is lacking, there can be no union of heart in prayer, and no spiritual edification. You have often noticed in a prayer-meeting that the brethren and sisters will be greatly quickened and edified by one brother's prayer, and not at all by another's. When one prays, it is most manifest that the hearts of all are moved; there is a sighing, an uplifting of heart, a general response; but when another leads, you see no such tokens of general sympathy. You can tell who can lead the hearts of the brethren in real prayer. You will always notice that no one can do this unless they have confidence in him, and unless they feel the deep pulsations of his heart moving upon their own. Sometimes this is seen in the family. The head of the family prays, but all have lost confidence in him, and are doing anything else and everything else but unite in his words of prayer. Is it wonderful that such prayer avails nothing? Indeed, the very expressions which such a man may use in prayer, will be interpreted as only so much hypocrisy! Alas, the spirit of prayer cannot be there! The spirit of dissent, and not the spirit of union, is there; they do not pray together, and cannot; they are not united in prayer; a spirit of alienation exists, unexpressed, but deep; perhaps their will is up about something. Even husband and wife do not pray together; they are chafed in their feelings toward each other, and are indulging a state of mind which forbids a spirit of mutual prayer. Often our prayer-meetings die out by reason of little bickerings and heart-burnings.

Brethren and sisters, will you not look to this?

Often, when people stay away from meetings for prayer, they assign other than the true and real reason. They do not say frankly, I stay away because I cannot hear this or that brother pray. They profess to be too busy--too much and too urgently occupied; but really they do not assign even to themselves the true reason--the very thing which has kept them back from the meeting.

At the Pentecost meeting, they neglected all other business. Yet they were poor in this world's goods, and had, no doubt, business enough to do; their women, also, had enough to do; yet they were all there. But suppose it had been the case that they felt their business to be too important to be dropped. Suppose they had said--"O, it cannot be necessary for us all to go; we are so full of business, and so pressed every way, and so fatigued withal;" do you believe that, making such excuses for neglect of prayer, they could have had the blessing? If they could not fulfill the condition, could they hope to receive the promise? If they would not meet the demand made by the condition, obviously the way would not be open for Christ to fulfill his promise. he could not grant them the blessing without virtually giving a bounty to remissness and unfaithfulness.

The fact is, brethren, our modern prayer-meetings are too cold and too constrained. Christians are not

earnest in prayer. Their souls cannot become deeply burdened and earnestly agonized in supplication; they do not thirst enough for spiritual blessings, and have not the deep communion with God which is requisite for prevailing prayer. You know what a burden is felt in a prayer-meeting when the heart is thoroughly broken; when pride is abased, the soul humbled, and the entire energies are drawn out in earnest supplication. But there are few such meetings for prayer now. There is a lack of sustaining unanimity. It is a law of mind that union of heart sustains the interest and power of prayer. Did you never observe how you can sustain another in prayer, if you enter deeply into his sympathies? You uphold his faith and his fervor. I have often thought that the practice common among the Methodists, is useful if not abused. The responses that truly come from the heart serve to quicken and sustain genuine prayer. The responses introduced in the service of the Church of England are excellent, provided only that the heart be in them. I love to hear these sustaining responses and to know that I have the sympathizing heart of those who profess to be praying with me. Often our prayer-meetings are cold and profitless because there is no liberty and no free utterance. The spirit of prayer is straitened, because the natural expressions of deep feeling are repressed. Said an English Congregationalist, "I do wish our people could learn of the Methodists how to have a prayer-meeting." He felt the need of an unconstrained utterance and of a free expression of feeling. Now I would not sanction heartless noise and vociferation; that is not prayer and cannot help real prayer. There is a wide difference between that and a meeting in which the heart had free scope, and the Spirit of God is not straitened, but ranges with free scope and melting power. I have seen prayer-meetings in which manifestly the whole congregation went forth before God in mighty prayer. Some of you have seen such prayer. The hearts of the people were moved as the trees of the forest before a mighty rushing wind. Words seem as if frightened with irrepressible emotion. You can see that God is there. Everyone feels it. An awe of the Holy Presence pervades each heart. And yet they are not afraid, but are drawn into sweet confidence and most earnest pleading. Literally they seem to pour out their hearts before him. This is true prayer, and meets the idea of social praying. It is a union of hearts before God's mercy-seat, the Spirit coming down to make intercession with their spirit with groanings that cannot be uttered. Every prayer-meeting should bear this character, modified only according to the type of those circumstances that call for prayer.

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)*.

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