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# The Sin of Fretfulness

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Lecture I

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Text.--Ps. 37:1: "Fret not thyself because of evil doers."

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

In discoursing from these words, I shall show--

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

*II. How to avoid it.*

## **I. Why we should not fret.**

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

will in every way tend to the injury of our own souls.

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

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

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

overruled for the promotion of the glory of God. No thanks to the sinner. He intended no such thing. He is perfectly free and responsible, and deserves to be punished just as much as though there were no overruling providence to bring good out of his intended evil. But the fact that it will be thus overruled, is a substantial reason why we should not fret about it.

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

lost in the will of God, he will recognize the universal providence of God, and having no will of his own, he will sweetly submit to all the Providences around him. He will blame the sinner and justify God, in suffering the evil doing rather than preventing it. He will look on it as something which has been permitted for wise and benevolent reasons, and will consider it highly absurd for him to fret at anything which occurs under the providence of the infinitely wise and benevolent God.

- 12. It is un-Godlike to fret at evil doers. God never frets, and why should we fret? And yet it concerns Him rather than ourselves, to resent wickedness. If anybody is injured vengeance belongs to Him, and not to us. But if He has good reasons for not fretting at what occurs, surely we need not fret about it. For it concerns Him infinitely more than it does us. When any trial falls in our way, we should always ask ourselves, now what is God's state of mind in view of this thing? Does He get out of patience, and suffer Himself to fret? Who would not be shocked at the idea of God's fretting at anything that occurs? Why then, should we fret?
- 13. Fretting destroys our own peace. Who does not know that the indulgence of the least fretfulness instantly breaks up the peace of our minds, brings a cloud over our spirits, and throws our souls into darkness? What Christian does not know this by his own experience? It is remarkable how easily our peace is destroyed. The least rising of impatience if indulged but for a moment, brings the spirit into rough waters, stirs up the sediment, and makes it for the time, like the troubled sea.
- 14. Fretting is also destructive to the peace of others. A fretful man is a great nuisance to all around him. Fretting seems to be contagious. If parents fret at their children, the children are almost certain to fret in return. If husbands fret at their wives, or wives at their husbands, the other is almost certain to fret in return, and thus the peace of a whole household will be continually destroyed by the wickedness of one fretful member.
- 15. Fretting grieves the Holy Spirit. He will not live where there is a fretful spirit. We are shocked and grieved if we go to a neighbor's house and find them in a fret. We feel embarrassed and uneasy, and if we find them out of humor, we retire in distress and disgust. And will not the Holy Spirit be grieved away and retire from us, if we suffer ourselves to fret in His presence?
- 16. It is destructive to our influence to fret. A fretful person can have very little Christian influence in any community. A fretful parent never governs his family well. A fretful minister, a fretful neighbor, in short, anyone that frets, destroys his Christian influence.

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

It destroys man's influence with God, to fret. A fretful professor of religion can never

prevail with God in prayer. The whole influence of a man's prayers, and exertions, and labors to convert others, will be lost on them, if he is known by them to indulge in fretfulness.

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

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

- 20. Another reason why we should not fret at evil doers, is because they are among the "all things that work together for good to them that fear God." How often can we see that the trials into which we fall, the temptations of Satan, and the wickedness of men around us, are working together on the whole, for our edification and growth in grace. We thus learn many lessons which we could learn in no other way. What Christian has not thanked God for making Satan in many instances so useful to him? Or if Christians have not done this, what Christian has not reason to do it? I can plainly see that from my greatest trials, I have often learned the most

useful lessons of my life. And I have often been led to thank God for all the abuses and temptations of wicked men and devils.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 8. Learn not to look altogether on the dark side of things; consider the virtues as well as the

vices of those around you. Dwell on the good and not altogether on the bad qualities of those with whom you associate. It is a dangerous thing for us to dwell too much on the evil doings of those around us. I have often been struck with the tendencies of certain minds, and the results of certain courses of conduct. Many of the Adventists and other come-outers and radicals of the present day, seem to be taken up altogether with considering the great wickedness of the church and of the world; and this has manifestly led them away from God. Great multitudes of them seem not at all to be aware of it, but as sure as they are ever saved, just so sure must they come to a knowledge of the fact that they have fallen away from God. And if I am not entirely mistaken, the way in which they have fallen, has been by considering so exclusively the wickedness of the world and church, as finally to get into the spirit of anathematizing both. Said a good brother who had been acquainted with one of the principal defenders of the doctrine of Annihilation--"Until I saw him I could not understand how he came to fall into that error, but when I heard him preach I understood it. It was manifest that he had the spirit of annihilation in him. He seemed to see nothing but the dark side of the picture; and the evils that were in the world seemed to engross his thought." Now let me say this is a dangerous and wicked state of mind, and if you would avoid fretting, learn to look on the bright side of the picture, and see the good that is in the world, and learn what God is doing to promote the happiness and holiness of man. Consider the virtues of those around you and whatever is praiseworthy. Understand what Paul says in Phillipians 4:8, "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if these be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things."

- 9. Make due allowances for the circumstances, education, &c., of evil doers. Considering the circumstances under which they act, their want of light, and many other things oftentimes greatly moderate the tendencies of their conduct to make us fret.
- 10. Remember that it is God and not you against whom sin is committed. The government of the universe is not committed to you. The kingdom is the Lord's--all things are His. He has made all things for Himself--even the wicked for the day of evil; and you need not by any means take on yourself the responsibility of managing His affairs, nor suffer yourselves to fret because things do not go as you would have them. He will take care to secure the ends of His own government, without your getting into a passion about it.
- 11. Don't suffer yourselves to dwell much in thought on the evil doings of those around you. If you are abused don't dwell on it. Pray for the evil doer and dismiss it from your thoughts, lest it be to you too great a temptation.
- 12. Pray for evil doers. You never can fret at a man for whom you are sincerely and earnestly praying. Fretting at an evil doer and earnestly praying for him, are things inconsistent with each other.
- 13. Labor to save their souls, and cultivate compassion toward them. If you are deeply engaged in pulling them out of the fire, if you are exercised with great love and compassion for their souls, you will not be apt to fret at them.

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

these conflicts until by them he is prepared for glory.

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

#### **REMARKS.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 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)*.

