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Forfeiting Birth-Right Blessings

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Text.--Heb. 12:15-17: "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled: Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

The transaction alluded to in this passage is one of the most affecting on the records of scripture. One of the main points in it was Esau's despising and selling his birthright.

In order to understand this, we shall need to revert a moment to the custom to which it alludes. The practice originated very early, was well known in the times of Abraham and Isaac, and even prevails still in some eastern countries, whereby the whole estate of the father or a double portion in it, for it assumed these two different forms, fell to the eldest son. With this was also connected a certain authority over the younger members of the family, often regarded as the authority of the father, transferred at his death to the eldest son.

But it is more to our purpose to notice that in pious families, certainly in the family of Abraham, a father's blessing, solemnly pronounced as he drew near the point of death, was one of the precious elements in the birthright of the favored son. Nor was this all. To Abraham and to his seed a blessed covenant had been given--a covenant which on certain conditions, pledged one class of temporal blessings--namely, the land of Canaan and a numerous posterity; and also another class of spiritual blessings--the Messiah in the line of his descendants, and through him blessings on all the nations of the earth. You may find this covenant expanded in Genesis 12, 14, 17, 22 chapters; and also in respect to its spiritual bearings, in Romans 4, and Galatians 3 and 4.

This covenant formed a precious legacy, descending from Abraham to Isaac and onward in the line of his descendants through distant generation. Yet let it be noticed that this legacy of blessings did not at first diffuse itself over all branches of these patriarchal families. Abraham had an Ishmael who had no inheritance in the things of this covenant. Isaac was the sole heir next after Abraham. And of his two sons it seemed to be well understood that only one could have the birthright and the blessing.

Now it can not be doubted that Esau understood all the important points involved in this legacy of promised blessings. He knew what his birthright included; he must have known the promises made and renewed so solemnly to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. He also doubtless understood the tenor on which these promises were to descend to him in connection with his birthright. And yet the history shows us how he took a course which forfeited them all. Returning at one time from the hunting field, faint with fatigue and hunger, he said to Jacob--"Feed me I pray thee, with that red pottage." Jacob said, "Sell me this day thy birthright." Esau said, "Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright be to me?" And Jacob said, "Swear unto me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob."

Such is the simple record given us of the circumstances of this transaction. They serve to shew how little Esau valued the blessings which came down to him from his godly ancestors. The appropriate reflection to be made on reading the narrative is, not this--See how strong the temptation was, and how much to be pitied was the unfortunate Esau who stood at the point of death and bartered away an intangible and valueless ideality for what which was the very stay of his life; but rather this--"Thus Esau despised his birthright." There is Esau "that profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

God set His seal to this act of Esau's. He took him at his word. Esau said--I sell it to Jacob. God confirmed the deed and it was henceforth Esau's no more. It passed from his hands forever. The Lord suffered another train of circumstances to transpire in which the solemn affirmation of the father transferred the birthright and the blessing to Jacob. There is no need at this time that I should fully detail all the circumstances--much less, that we should attempt to justify in all points the scheme of deception by which the mother effected this end.

It may however be not amiss to remark that even before the birth of these two sons, the Lord had clearly predicted that the law of primogeniture in their case should be reversed so that the elder should serve the younger. She might therefore have felt that as the time drew near when a father's blessing was to single out the favored son, it was important that the purpose of God in respect to the younger of the two should stand.

While we can not justify her measures, yet we may remark that God's purpose did stand. The aged father pronounced on Jacob the ever memorable blessing--"Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." Gen. 27:28, 29. Scarcely had Jacob withdrawn when Esau came, announced himself, and besought his father to arise and eat and bless him. Now the whole truth flashed upon the mind of Isaac. He had given away the blessing--to Jacob. It could not be revoked. He was conscious that the hand of God was on him in giving it to Jacob and he could not recall it. He reveals the facts to Esau--Jacob came--"I have eaten of his meat before thou camest, and have blessed him; yea and he shall be blessed." Sad news to Esau. Yet one more effort remains. He may perhaps get another blessing equally valuable for himself. He cries therefore "with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father--Bless me, even me also, O my father. Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice

and wept." But he found no place of repentance--no possibility of changing his father's mind--though he sought it carefully with tears. The die is cast forever. He himself had sold his birthright, and God had confirmed his rash mad act, and given it to Jacob.

This is indeed one of the most affecting scenes on sacred record. It is peculiarly striking and solemn when we regard it as a kind of faint portraiture of that everlasting anguish and regret which will seize upon every lost sinner's heart when the truth shall ultimately flash upon him--my soul is lost--I have sold it for a mess of pottage, and it is lost forever.

Esau's sin consisted in despising this great blessing which belonged by birth to him. It is plain that he set no just value upon it. Its spiritual part he seems to have held in no estimation whatever. Suppose that he had been at the point to die of hunger; was it nothing to him to retain even then, his hold of Jehovah's gracious covenant? Was that a fit moment to despise his birthright and all its divinely promised blessings?

We may next observe that from this point, the law of primogeniture seems to have been annulled and never restored again in its full form and force as it existed before. When Jacob came to die, he called together all his sons and gave them all his blessing. They all alike seem to have become partakers of the promises. The birthright seemed to diffuse itself over the whole family. Together they became a nation of God's people, heirs in common of most of those blessings which came down to Isaac and to Jacob in the narrow line of the birthright.

It is much to our purpose to notice distinctly the fact that when the Jewish nation were set aside for their unbelief, a still wider diffusion of these promised blessings took place. The apostle Paul both announces and evinces the fact that all who are Christ's are Abraham's seed and heirs with him of this great promise. All are equally with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, sons of the birthright, entitled to that covenant which pledges peculiar blessings to children on the ground of the faith and obedience of their parents. This is a point which we should by no means overlook. There is too much of precious promise in it, it would seem, to allow us to forget or disown it. If we were to do either, might it not be said of us that we have despised our birthright?

Recurring to our text, I observe that the transaction alluded to there, and indeed the whole history of the Bible, recognize the fact that this blessing may be forfeited. Here let me read some passages, showing that God couples children with their parents in both His promises and His threatenings. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul that thou mayest live." Deut. 30:6. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-sources. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Isa. 44:3-5. "As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Isa. 59:21. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are

afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:38, 39. Observe here that this reveals the great law of the gospel dispensation. The gospel reign has now begun and its spirit and its principles are now beginning to be developed. Just here now we find the cheering announcement--"The promise, that is, of the Holy Ghost, is unto you and to your children."

Again, we find in Romans 4, that Paul distinctly argues this great point, to show that all believers inherit the very same spiritual covenant which God gave first to Abraham. It was given to him not of law but of faith; hence all who have this faith inherit it.

The same doctrine is held and argued in Galatians 3 and 4, it being there maintained that "the blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;" and the conclusion arrived at, being that "if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Thus we see that God connects children with their parents in His promises of blessings.

But let us dwell now more distinctly on the fact so plainly involved in our text--that these blessings may be forfeited.

It is plain they may be forfeited by contempt. If either parents or children treat them as of no value, they are in infinite peril of forfeiting them altogether, and God may at once take the forfeiture at their hands. Such treatment on their part must be exceedingly provoking to God, and none need wonder that God should say--If you despise these blessings, you need not have them.

Again, these blessings may be forfeited by a delay to embrace them. There is a limit beyond which God cannot wait on either parents, or children. This very delay implies that the blessings are lightly esteemed. For this reason therefore God might well arise in His displeasure and shut the door of hope and mercy.

Another obvious reason lies in the very nature of the present scenes of probation. Life must have an end, and may end quickly.

Still again, the blessings of this covenant may be forfeited by ignorance or unbelief. If parents do not understand its provisions or do not believe its promises, they may so entirely fail of laying hold by faith of these blessings as to forfeit them utterly and forever.

Again, they may be forfeited and lost through presumption. Children may tempt God as Esau did, presuming that God will give the blessing of course, although they have despised and sold it. Such seems to have been the case of Esau. He must have known that these covenant blessings accompanied the birthright; and yet he acted as if he supposed that his having foolishly sold his birthright to Jacob could not be taken as a forfeit. He presumed either that Isaac did not know of that transaction, or that it would not prevent his bestowing the blessing on himself even if he did. But his presumption was only another sample of his folly.

So it is no doubt often the case that the children of pious parents tempt God and forfeit all these

blessings. They may have heard much of this covenant, and they rely on it for their own salvation, while they put off repentance and provoke God till he cuts them down in their sins and shuts the door against their salvation forever. We have on record in the Bible many cases of parents and children who did forfeit these blessings. In many ways has the Lord taught us that children will be greatly affected by the course pursued by their parents. Curses or blessings come on them according as their parents are faithless in God or reckless of fulfilling the conditions of the covenant on the one hand, or are faithful on the other in labors and in prayers for their salvation.

This principle is amply recognized in several passages, some of which I will now refer to as illustrations. In the second of the ten commandments, we read, "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments." Thus in this solemn promulgation of Jehovah's will did He most emphatically recognize this principle that parents and children are most closely connected together, so that for the parent's sake good or ill shall come on their children. Yet let it be here observed that this does not imply that God punishes the child for its parent's sin. By no means. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord most distinctly declares that He never does this.

But there is yet scope for visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. A drunken father shall entail poverty, disease, and disgrace upon his offspring; yet shall not his offspring be at all punished for his sins. The punishment of individuals pertains to the next world and never to this. These providential circumstances which place our earthly trail in poverty or plenty--in sickness or in health--in disgrace or in honor--these are by no means our punishment in any proper sense. They may be evils; and in view of their final results they may not be. It may however well be an affliction to parents to be the guilty means of bringing disease, poverty and disgrace upon their children. Yet God has so connected parents and children together that such results naturally follow a parent's sins.

When the Lord condescended to show Moses His glory, "He passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Ex. 34:6, 7.

In Lev. 20:5, the Lord expresses one of His solemn threatenings against idol worship thus; "Then will I set my face against that man and against his family." In the case of Achan you all remember that God visited His fearful judgments on both the father and all his children.

These passages and cases I have alluded to, in order to show that parents often forfeit these covenant blessings for their children.

Both parents and children may so fatally forfeit this blessing that God will not return to renew the forfeited covenant, and reverse His decision. Isaac could not reverse what he had done in giving the blessing to Jacob. He was probably conscious that God had spoken through him in the blessing on Jacob, and now how could he of his own will reverse it? He could do no such thing. He seems to have been greatly astonished and amazed to find the blessing gone to Jacob, but he knew that God's hand

was in it, and he dared not attempt a change. Yea, said he, "and he shall be blessed."

Parents may shut themselves out from these blessings. Of this we have a striking case in that generation of the Hebrew people which came out of Egypt under Moses. With an high hand and an out-stretched arm, Jehovah had led them forth; with water from the smitten rock, and bread from heaven, had He sustained them, and with His daily presence in the cloud and in the fire had He guided them, and now, brought to the very verge of Canaan, perhaps already presuming that their toils were all over, they lose all through their cruel and wicked unbelief. In the very moment perhaps of their highest anticipations the Lord crushed all their hopes, shut and barred the doors of the promised land upon them and doomed them to wander forty years with their children till the plains of that wide waste were whitened with their bones. None could enter Canaan till the unbelieving fathers were all numbered with the dead. "Ye shall know, said the Lord, My breach of promise." Ye shall know that though I promised to Moses that I would bring you into Canaan, yet I can not fulfil that promise to you who have forfeited it by your unbelief and your rebellion against Me. For good reasons God had sworn in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest; and no entreaties or measures of theirs could induce Him to reverse that awful oath.

In this transaction of Esau, there are many points of most solemn and affecting interest. It teaches us this fact--that there is such a thing as sinning once too much. So did Esau. He reached a crisis--by one fatal deed he capped the climax of his iniquity--by one additional sin, he shut the door forever upon his own soul and cut off all hope of ever regaining the lost blessing. Mark well his case. In a fit of faintness from hunger and fatigue, he showed the real attitude of his heart in respect to this blessing. He had so little regard for it that he sold it for a mess of pottage. So of the Hebrew nation on the borders of Canaan. There is a last sin--a point in transgression beyond which mercy cannot go--at which justice interposes, and takes the sinner's case into His own hands.

The forfeiture of this on the part of either parents or children depends on the light they have. Their danger is critical and their guilt great in proportion to the knowledge they may have of the nature and value of the covenant and its promised blessings. In the case of Esau, we must suppose that he had light enough to enable him to appreciate the worth of his birthright. He could not but know how God had appeared over and over again to his godly grandfather, and to his father, giving and renewing those great and precious promises; he well enough knew that Abraham valued these promises infinitely more than all his earthly wealth; and yet with all this knowledge before his mind he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Well does a sacred writer call him, "that profane person," Esau. Forcible and pertinent is the remark of the original historian--"Thus Esau despised his birthright." No wonder that the Lord abhorred his conduct, and stamped his reckless disregard of these great blessings with the seal of His own indignation. Esau had too much light. His guilt was too great; his sin could not be forgiven. See also the Hebrew nation on the borders of Canaan. What had they seen? The uplifted hand of the Almighty ten times falling on oppressive Egypt, and finally whelming her armies in the depths of the Red Sea; that same Hand guiding themselves in love by fire and by cloud through the trackless desert, spreading for them a daily table there with angel's food; smiting Amalek before them when the hands of prayer were uplifted and upheld; rebukes from on high, chastening and scourging them for their idolatry, their murmurings and unbelief; all these things were fresh before their minds, for all had transpired before their eyes with the lapse of some two or three years; and yet with all this light before them, they dare to rebel against the Lord and will not believe His word nor

trust His power to save. "So He swore in His wrath that they should never enter into His rest." What could have been more just than this?

Now if it be true that the Lord rejected them the more readily because they had great light, then how important for us to enquire into our own responsibilities and dangers. Is not our light greater far than theirs? How critical then must be our condition? How imminent our peril of provoking the Lord to swear in His wrath that neither we nor our children shall ever enter into His rest.

Whenever either parents or children have forfeited the blessings of this covenant, the fact may be known by its closing up all access to the mercy seat in prayer. If the parents themselves are rejected as the Hebrew nation were on the borders of Canaan, the door of access is shut against themselves. They cannot pray acceptably for themselves. If their children have forfeited their birthright like Esau, then the parents cannot have a spirit of prayer for those children. This is plain, beyond question. It could not be of any avail for the rejected Hebrew nation to pray that God would let them go up into Canaan. They could not possibly have an acceptable spirit of prayer for this object, since God had sworn in His wrath that they should not enter. The Spirit would not help their infirmities, and make intercession in their hearts, to pray against the fearful oath of Jehovah. Neither in the other case could it be of any avail for Isaac to pray for profane Esau's pardon and the reversal of the sentence against him.

If you have observed with care and extensively, you have doubtless seen many cases illustrating this position. I have had occasion to observe many--so many that I cannot but regard this as a most striking mark of being rejected from God's covenant. If any of you have actually rejected this covenant, and God has taken you at your word, you will have no longer any spirit of prayer for blessings that are to come through that covenant; you will have no liberty of soul before God--no pleadings of the Spirit of the Lord within you--no strugglings and agonizings of the Holy Ghost within your heart for the souls of your children--no mighty help from the Lord, giving you power to believe and lay hold of the covenant and really close in upon the naked word of the Lord and say, "Lord, Thou hast spoken, now do as Thou hast said." I recollect the case of one backslider who had long been far away from God, and during this time his children had been growing up and hardening their hearts in sin. When he came to awake to his condition and see where he had been and what he had done, it was heart-rending to hear him exclaim, "I cannot pray for my children, I have ruined their souls forever, I can get no access to God in praying for them." Now this is no uncommon case. Parents break their covenant with God, and then He withdraws it and holds Himself no longer bound by its promises.

Again, where the children of pious parents treat their birthright with indifference, or disregard, as many do, and seem not to appreciate the blessing of being born of pious parents, they may expect the God of Abraham will give them up. In every age of the world God has recognized this principle, and has taken care to leave cases of fearful warning on record both in sacred and in all church history showing that His patience cannot be forever abused with impunity, and that He sometimes takes the reckless forfeiture of His covenant at the hands of the guilty, abandoned rebel.

On the other hand the Lord has always conferred blessings on faithful parents and faithful children. How often is it implied in the Bible that God felt Himself bound to confer great blessings on the Jews because of their connection with Abraham. The Psalmist touched this point when he said, "But the

mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them." Ps. 103:17, 18.

In the same manner and by the same immutable laws of Jehovah's moral government will great curses come upon children and upon children's children for the backsliding and unfaithfulness of their parents.

Again, I remark that after parents have long violated this covenant by grievous backslidings, God sometimes renews it. He has promised yet to do this to the Jewish nation when they shall again return to Him. Thus He holds Himself ready to renew covenant with parents even after most bitter backslidings, and after their children are on the very verge of destruction. So wonderful is His long-suffering--so rich beyond expression is His mercy--so does He love to bring the families of His people into His covenant where He can bless them and show forth His faithfulness and His great lovingkindness.

When the Lord does this, it is always on the condition of repentance; it can never happen on any other condition. His people must return with brokenness of heart, and bitter tears, confessing and forsaking all their sins against Him. Then God for Christ's sake can forgive and can restore. They will have the evidence of this in a returning spirit of faith and prayer.

Now mark; perhaps I have spoken the experience of some parents here. You have some of you felt that you could not lay hold of this covenant--you could not grasp these promises by faith: the Lord did not write this covenant in your heart; but on your repentance the Lord meets you with gracious pardon--writes anew His covenant on your very hearts, and gives you thus the inward witness of your acceptance in the bonds of that covenant. Then you felt that verily you had occasion to bless and magnify the name of the Lord.

REMARKS.

1. The birthright of God's children is of infinite value. The Lord promised to Abraham and to his posterity, not Canaan only or chiefly; but spiritual blessings, to children for their parents sake; and then brought all the Christian church up on to the same broad platform of promise, making them heirs by faith of the same covenant and of all its spiritual blessings. And what a covenant is this! How infinitely precious to the pious parent's heart! How glorious to God as well as blissful to man! Who can fully estimate its value? What if you might inherit the throne and crown of Britain, and then pass it down as a legacy to your children. Your eye would sparkle--your heart flutter at the tidings. What if you might inherit an estate worth a million. But how much more may you inherit in the promised mercies of this glorious covenant! Thrones and gold are only chaff in the comparison; here are substantial, everlasting realities.

2. Great multitudes in every age have broken this covenant and forfeited its blessings. Even in the family of Isaac there was one who forfeited these blessings and thus brought on himself not the blessings promised to Abraham, but the heaviest curses. Oh, how many wayward sons have sold their birthright as Esau did, and the Lord has shut them off from the blessings of His covenant. And how

many professedly pious parents too--strange that they should not more rationally appreciate the priceless value of this covenant!

Suppose you inherit a throne--a crown; would you recklessly forfeit it? Would you not say--This belongs now to my children; let me keep it for them? Indeed you would be most earnest and watchful--you would prize it, and nothing could induce you to be remiss in preserving so rich a good and handing it down unsullied to your children.

3. It is amazing to see how little many children realize the value of these blessings. What! do you not understand, dear children, that great blessings are promised you for your pious parent's sake? Do you not know the value of this birthright? Hear David urge this plea--"Have mercy upon me, O God, and save the son of Thy handmaid."

4. Many parents have occasion for most bitter reflection upon their own folly and guilt in forfeiting this covenant. Said a father to me--"I have no confidence to pray for my children; they have gone from under my influence; I cannot even reach them with my prayers." If any of you my hearers, are in this state, the only thing you can do is to repent and plead with God to return in mercy and renew His covenant with you. Go humble yourself before Him; entreat Him not to take your forfeiture of the covenant at your hands and make it final and fatal.

And brethren, how pertinent are the words of Paul to this case; "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." A promise being left us, beloved, O let us not come short!

It is possible, nay perhaps probable that there may be parents here who have already fallen short, and lost hold of this glorious covenant. Come ye who are professedly Christian parents--let me talk with you about this. How long since you entered into this covenant with God for your children? How old were you then? How many children have you thus dedicated to God? Where are they now? Where have they been? Through much prayer and faith and most diligent keeping of the covenant, have they received its promised blessings; or does their hard heart and wicked life bear testimony against you? O have you forsaken this covenant, and has the Lord forsaken you and your children? Like Eli of old, have you neglected to restrain them, and have they in consequence plunged into fearful hardness, or possibly, crime? If you have broken covenant, will you not seek the Lord now, if possibly He may renew it and give you a fresh hold upon its promised blessings? It may be that you have let the promise slip, and now can find no place for repentance though you seek it carefully with tears. Perhaps God seems to say to you--"They shall know My breach of promise!"--awful words!

One word to children. God has committed to you a great and sacred trust. Have you despised your birthright? Have you made light of these blessings and vilely cast them off? If so, the day will come when you will see your folly in bitter anguish. Like Esau you may wail out with a great and bitter cry--"O is there no forgiveness for me--ah is there none?"

I once had a friend whose death under the attendant circumstances was deeply and awfully affecting. He had a pious and praying mother--a careful mother, who had watched over his early years with Christian assiduity, and many tears. His father was a good man, and while for some months I boarded

in the family, I could not but say, "This is a well-ordered and godly household." Rarely if ever have I seen a better regulated Christian family, or more care taken in training children.

Some years afterwards I saw this son to whom I referred, in the great revival at Rochester. He had been from home some time and of course away from the influence of his parents. In this revival he acted through out like a fool. Vain, proud, giddy, at first he took the ground that he would not be so singular as to become a Christian alone, while none else were coming out for the Lord; but when hundreds began to gather round the Savior's feet, he changed his tone and would not repent then, because he said he would not disgrace himself by going with the rabble. Just so full of nonsense and mad folly were all his positions. He lived through the revival a hardened sinner.

Next came the fearful cholera and smote him among its first victims. It swept over his robust frame with terrible desolation, and almost in an hour he was on the bed of death. His godly father and praying mother rush to his bedside; there is no time for many words; the agonized son cries out, O, my father--can't you pray for your dying son? The father is speechless. Mother, can't you pray for me before I die? The mother can't pray. No, not even that mother. It seemed to them as if there was no audience before mercy's throne. They could not pray for that son. You may conceive of their deep, unutterable agony; O could you have witnessed the awful scene! A dying son of pious parents--who could not pray himself, and for whom even a pious father and mother can get no access to God in prayer! O could you only hear his last words of shrieking anguish--"what, father, mother, can't you pray for your dying son!"

The oath of the Almighty had passed, and the Lord saw fit to make him an awful monument to the whole city of His stern, His righteous, but inexorable Justice! O how all who heard it stood aghast, and how did it make the ears of all the people tingle! It was Jehovah's awful voice of warning!

Among these young men before me is there not an Esau? Have you not despised and sold your birthright--you, young man, whose pious father and mother have poured out their scalding tears for you like water, and their agonizing prayers as if they could not be denied; but you have presumed on mercy and kept on in sin; you have resisted the Spirit and insulted your Maker; O could you have seen that young man die, and could you have heard his last imploring wail--"O can't you pray for your dying son;" and could you have realized how the iron of despair entered his soul as he sunk in the chill arms of death and all the bitterness of unutterable anguish filled the hearts of those who had prayed for him in his childhood, but might pray for him no more; O could you see, or only realize one scene of this sort, you might learn one of the lessons of fearful warning by which your Maker would admonish you not to trifle with the salvation of your soul. O! the folly of sinners--the folly of those children of pious parents who sell their birthright for less than a morsel of meat, sometimes even for poison. O! why will they forsake God, and slight His covenant? Why will they forfeit His mercies and provoke His everlasting frown?

Ye who are parents, have any of you broken your covenant with God for your children? Then come and bring along those children of the covenant, and let us all humble ourselves before the Lord, deeply repent of all our sins, and entreat His mercy, if peradventure He may be gracious to us and renew His covenant with us, and once more write it on our hearts.

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)*.