

What Saith the Scripture?

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God's Love to Sinners as Seen in the Gospel

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Text.--John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The subject of this great love is God. It is no other than God who is here said to have so loved this world. Hence God is not a mere intellect, but is a being capable of loving.

This declaration about God's love is not a mere figure of speech accommodated to our apprehension, and hence perhaps not meaning nearly so much as it seems to mean. No, this is no accommodating figure, but a statement of fact,--of fact substantiated by what God has actually done. God loved so much that He gave up His only Son--for sinners. Hence we know that God really loves, and as much more intensely than any creature as He is greater than any.

Who is the object of this love? God we have seen is the lover: but who can be the object loved? The great God loves somebody!--Who is it? Who is the favored object of Jehovah's love? Whom is He here declared to love?

Sinners are apt to think that God is an infinite abstraction, infinitely above themselves, and quite indifferent as to their welfare: but this text declares that God has most surely and most intensely loved this world. This world it says, meaning not this globe--not this round ball of solid matter, but its people--the living, intelligent, moral, yet sinning race that live and have their being here.

But we must look at the nature of this love. What sort of love is it?

Now we know that sinners hate God: and yet here we are told that God loves them. We must therefore ask--With what kind of love? For on this point it is of the utmost importance to make the proper discriminations, lest we should be led to suppose that God's love to sinners is mere good nature--a soft and spontaneous feeling which has no regard to character. It should be well understood that God's love towards sinners is no such thing as this.

God's love to sinners is not a love of complacency, for this form of love fastens upon the character. It

is simply delight in character; and who does not know that in regard to their character, God can have no delight in sinners? Their characters are altogether loathsome to Him. Hence God's love for sinners cannot be a love of their characters; and can be only a love of them as sentient beings capable of happiness and misery--i.e. a sincere regard and an earnest desire for their well-being. Parents sometimes have very bad children, and yet they love them, bad though they be. They love them in the sense of desiring their welfare and delighting to do them good. The prodigal son was greatly beloved, although by no means lovely in character. Many a son of such a character has been the object of yearning affection on the part of his parents. They have cheerfully suffered anything that human nature could bear, in order to promote the real welfare of their wayward son. Of this we have a most striking illustration in the case of David and Absalom. Absalom had artfully and maliciously seized his father's throne, dishonored his father's bed, and sought his father's life, yet when David marshaled his little band of yet faithful men to take the field against this base usurper, his heart yearned over the base monster and he besought his generals, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." And when the unnatural son was brought back a corpse, his grief was inconsolable. He refused to be comforted. So strong were his expressions of sorrow and grief that Joab was afraid of its influence upon his army, and solemnly rebuked his king for giving indulgence to such feelings in such an emergency. "Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants who have this day saved thy life, in that thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends, for thou hast declared this day that thou regardest neither princes nor servants; for this day I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well."

To this rebuke David could only answer--I have only given scope to the outbursting of a father's heart. And indeed it was only the deep yearnings of a pious father's heart that sought expression in such words and groans, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" An ungodly son dies in his sins, and a pious father bemoans his awful death in such language as this! We rarely find anything in history that so forcibly illustrates God's love to sinners as does this lamination of David over Absalom. Under the influence of his strong affection, David seemed almost to overlook the public danger, for when his army went out to battle and the issue was still in dark suspense, he bade his officers deal gently for his sake with the young man Absalom. Now God does not and cannot overlook the public danger, through His great love for sinners, and yet He ventures to pardon and forgive under circumstances which may look as if He did. O how truly is Jehovah's love for sinners the love of a father towards a wayward son! Many suppose that such language as this in our text has no meaning. Oh, how little they understand the facts of the case! It has a meaning deep and sincere, and is no figure of speech by any means. When in language so like that of David, the most High God cries out--"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." We cannot but see the honest heart-yearnings of one who loves the race and who is moved to the very depths of his great heart by the pressure of a stern necessity to inflict punishment. See the heart of a father standing out in the tears and compassionate tones of the king! He would not suffer one hair to fall from the head of his guilty son if he could wisely, safely, spare him; He longs to save your forfeited life; and when in the very act of rebellion you fall and He is obliged to drive the chariot-wheels of His government over your prostrate body, he mournfully laments your fall!

Again, this love reaches every individual member of the race. The declaration can mean nothing less than that God loves every human being--all without any exception. What a thought is this! And how

difficult for sinner to persuade themselves of its truth--especially of its absolute truth in reference to themselves in particular. Did you ever try to realize this? Did you ever ask yourself--is it indeed true that the great God has a deep personal regard for my happiness, like that which an earthly father has towards his son? Can I believe that His love for me is so great that He finds His happiness even in heaven in unwearied concern to secure my personal salvation? Such is the fact.

The great difficulty with sinners is that their unbelief as to God is so great that this conception does not get into their minds at all. Yet is it none the less true, and is a truth that sinners greatly need to understand and take home to their hearts.

Again, this love of God to sinners is a patient love--patient even to the extent of long-suffering--long-enduring the most grievous provocations. If any of you, now living in your sins, had any just sense of your sin against God, and of your great provocations of His wrath, you would cry out, "How can it be possible for God to have any tender regard for me? How can He but think of me only as an enemy of His, to be crushed before Him as a guilty rebel!"

You speak sometimes of the forbearance of parents towards wayward, vicious children, but how far does this fall short of God's forbearance towards sinners! Suppose you are a wicked child towards your parents, so wicked that you have never obeyed them in a single instance. You have always done as bad as you could--have invariably pursued a course of persecution, opposition, and utter hostility: if such had been your course and character, would you expect forbearance from human parents? Oh no, none but God can be expected to have forbearance equal to such an emergency.

I beg you to look at this case fairly. Suppose a young lady were to enter this school, and it should be truly said of her when she came that she had always been a trial and a torment to her parents--had never been known to obey them or to do anything to please them, what would you say of her? What would you think of her? If you learned that notwithstanding all her parents had still forbore and loved and sought only her best good, would you not admire their spirit as something more than human? But the daughter or the son that has so abused his parents you would feel was not fit to live. Your spontaneous indignation would cry aloud--Let him be spewed out from all human society! There is no fit place for such a wretch beneath the light of the sun!

Now, sinners, I entreat you to apply this honestly to yourselves. You have done nothing else since you had a being, but oppose God! You have not yet done the first thing, however small, from a sincere desire to please Him! You know that's the truth! And yet God holds you up in existence--holds you up from dropping into hell! He represents Himself as holding your feet from sliding, as they stand on the slippery places of the sinner's pathway. Ah, how long He has done this very thing! You have regularly abused all the manifestations of His love, and trampled under foot all His commandments. God says, "all this hast thou done, and I kept silence." But though silent, He has not forgotten. Yet love will wait in its long-suffering patience till it can wait no longer.

Mark also the lowliness of this love. See how low it stoops. Of the great Impersonation of this love it was said, "He took on Him the form of a servant, and made Himself of no reputation." He was meek and lowly of heart. Such was the condescension of the Son of God! Scarcely if at all less was the condescension of the Infinite Father. Think at how great expense He provided the means of your

salvation. Think of the self-denial to which He submitted. Do you ask--what did He do? Gave up to death His only Son. Gave Him, freely, not for money but for love. When Abraham called of God, went forth to offer up Isaac, and when he had freely shown his purpose of heart to obey God and trust Him if need be to raise up his slaughtered son from the dead, God said to him, "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, therefore have I sworn by myself that I will greatly bless thee, and will greatly multiply thy seed, even as the stars of heaven." It was a strong point in Abraham's case that he did not withhold his only son. So also, God did not spare His only Son, but freely gave Him up for an offering. In the case of Abraham, he only brought his only son to the altar and drew his knife--there God's angel caught his arm and pointed out a ram for the real offering. But when God gave up His only Son, the demands of justice against the sinner took their course upon his substitute, and the innocent victim was brought to the slaughter. Nailed to the cross, He bled, agonized, languished and died! Was ever love like that?

Again, this was love towards enemies--towards those whose carnal mind was enmity against God. This circumstance "commends the love of God towards us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

This feature in the state of the divine mind is not easily conceived by minds as selfish as ours. Even the best of men are hardly an exception to this remark. How often do you hear them pray that God would bless all their friends. Now in some respects it is quite proper that we should pray for our friends, but we should pray not less for our enemies. Christ prayed for His friends, but so He did for His enemies also. If we were in the practice of praying with all our heart, for our worst enemies, we could better understand how Christ should die for His enemies.

Many sinners say, "O, if we were truly converted, God would love us." True; He would then love you with the love of complacency. Now He loves you with the love of compassion. Yet even this you scarcely realize at all. You find it very hard to conceive how God should put His Son in the hands of wicked men, and let them murder Him, in order that the murderers might be saved! O surely He would convince you if He could, that in His deepest affection He loves you! He would make this impression so strong on your heart, that even when you come to see your great sin, you will still hold on to the strange truth that God has so loved your soul as to give up the life of His Son for its salvation.

Yet again, this love of God for sinners is a spontaneous love. It was self-moved. None of the race of lost men asked for it. God did not find the world on its bended knees in imploring supplication, but on the contrary, found them all in rebellion--rebellion strong and stern, fiercely struggling to get quite away from God's authority. Yet even so, His love gushed forth towards them in infinite compassion.

This was also a persevering love. It was not a love which after a few abortive efforts falls back and gives over the struggle to save. It was not like the love of some Christians for the impenitent, who after a few prayers and efforts, give up the endeavor, especially if they meet with opposition. But God's love for the lost in sin is a persevering love, not easily exhausted--a love that many waters cannot quench nor floods drown. O how well for the sinner that it is all this!

It is also a holy love. If it had been otherwise, it might have sought to save by means that would have

put in jeopardy the interests of His government. It was a critical and difficult undertaking--this effort to rescue the sinner over whom the violated law was posing its thunderbolts. By some means, the demands of Law must be satisfied and yet the sinner be spared; but it must be in such a way as will make an impression of the awful guilt of sin--of its great wickedness, and especially of the purity and holiness of the great Magistrate of the universe. It will by no means answer to do anything that shall misrepresent His character. On this point there will be the greatest danger when He comes to set aside the execution of His law, and throw the doors of mercy wide open, and invite every sinner to come forward and enter in. But all this danger has been guarded against most fully in the sacrifice of His glorious Son. It was a love blended with holiness and purity that took these precautions. The necessity was felt of making some demonstrations, which all beings in heaven, earth and hell should see. God must write it out in such characters as all can read--engrave it as it were on the everlasting rocks, so that through all coming ages, every mind in the universe may have the demonstration all present to its view, showing how much God hated sin, and how sacred He holds His holy law. He made this impression when He gave up His Son to die in the sinner's stead. There, too, He demonstrated the purity of His love for the sinner. He showed that it was not mere good nature that would save sinners any how, and cared not for the consequences to the stability of His kingdom. There He made the truth stand out in strong and bold relief, that He loved His kingdom not the less because He loved the lost sinner. The welfare of the holy, of the yet unfallen, must not be put in jeopardy in order to save the guilty.

God's love for sinners is also a wakeful, solicitous love. It pities its objects, and sets the heart most intently on blessing those it loves. You may have seen Christians in revivals, after their hearts had been brought into deep sympathy with Christ for souls. You observed how wakeful, how anxious, how burdened their hearts were. Perhaps they could scarcely eat or sleep through their great solicitude for the salvation of souls. What made Jesus Christ spend whole nights in prayer? Ah, He was sent to redeem a lost world, and the burden of souls lay heavy on His heart. It was but plain language without a figure when His disciples applied to Him the passage, "The zeal of my house hath eaten me up." A zeal for God had thrown upon His heart such a burden of care and solicitude as wasted His mortal frame away. The prophet foresaw this when in a vision he said of Him--"his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." How strange his aspect!

Old age sat on His faded brow ere he had scarce reached thirty. An old man in His very youth--for the "zeal of God's house had eaten Him up." O the depth of His compassions for the lost whom He came to save! Hear what He says: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" O that baptism of suffering which for months and years hung heavily on His heart in the solicitude of anticipation; and yet love falters not.

Do you understand this? Do you know from any similar experience of your own what this state of mind is? The fact is, those who have never entered into sympathy with this deep benevolent solicitude for poor lost souls cannot understand the love of God for sinners. To all but those who have had some experience it is a dark and unknown state of mind. But when you come into sympathy with God in this thing, when you pour out your life and soul for sinners, then you begin to have some just conceptions of what the state is and then you can begin to understand the nature of God's great love for sinners.

This love moreover is fully of pity. Under its deep emotions, God is represented as being greatly moved. Hear Him break out in the depth of His feelings--"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." My feeling was stirred up by his provoking sins and I spake against him that I would soon cut him down; but presently parental affection rises up--a father's heart earnestly remembers him still. Such is the pity of God for sinners. If God had not such pity as this, how could we account for His conduct in sparing sinners so long? How could we explain it that He has not long since hurled every sinner down to hell?

But I must pass to notice the end sought in this scheme of love. God gave His Son to the end that "whosoever would believe on Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life."

It seems to me passing strange that Mr. Storrs and those who hold with him, should seize upon such expressions as this and make them teach the annihilation of the wicked. They hold, as perhaps you know, that "perishing" means annihilation, and hence that the end to be secured by Christ's death is no other than to save sinners from annihilation and give them an immortal existence. I find by conversation with them that they are led to this belief by their notions of literal sense. They hold that all the language of the Bible must be construed literally, and that the literal sense of the word--perish--is annihilation. But in both these views they are entirely mistaken. Not to dwell at present upon the former, let us consider for a moment the latter. The literal sense of the word perish, is not annihilation. When matter is said to perish, it only changes its form and mode of existence; it is not annihilated. Indeed matter so far as we can see knows nothing of annihilation. So that Mr. Storrs fails utterly in applying his doctrine of literal sense, even if the doctrine itself were true. Besides, perishing is here put in contrast with everlasting life. But this everlasting life is not a mere existence, prolonged forever--by no means;--it is eternal fruition--everlasting blessedness; and hence its opposite must be everlasting misery.

Moreover, if annihilating the wicked would have answered all the purposes of penalty for the transgression of law, and all things considered, God had seen it wise to punish sinners in this way, He could have done it in a moment, and could have created another world of holy beings with only saying--Let it be! All would have been easy and soon done. But we cannot see any good reason why it should be needful for Christ to die on the cross, solely for the purpose of saving sinners from the doom of annihilation.

Hence we see that the object of Christ's death for sinners is to bring them back into fellowship and harmony with God and holiness--to make them obedient sons again in His great family.

The means of effecting this change in the moral attitude of sinners towards their great and good Father are especially the full revelations which God makes of Himself before the very eyes of men through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Christ came in mortal flesh to live, to labor, to speak and act among men as a man, that He might reveal the true character of God to our race. Hence Christ is called the Word of God, because He reveals God to us, as words reveal thought from mind to mind. This is not the only object of Christ's incarnation, but it is one object and a great one.

Let it then be understood that Christ came in human flesh to reveal before our eyes the great love of

God, and to make us understand indeed all the great moral attributes of God. He gave His only Son to come among men and live among them as a neighbor. Some of you are mechanics; Christ wrought among his neighbors as a mechanic, to teach men what a mechanic should be. He wrought as a son during His minority, to teach what a dutiful son should be. Then He appeared in public life, showing what men should be in this relation. In all these respects He sought to unfold His true character, so that as a model and more particularly as an exemplification of the true God, He might make His abode among men of the utmost possible service. It was one of the great objects of the incarnation to reveal God so that men should renew their confidence in Him. Sin brought with itself doubt and unbelief respecting God, and this doubt and unbelief must be counteracted before the sinner can be saved. Men whose hearts indulge enmity always try to vindicate and justify their enmity by believing evil of the party hated. Enmity, no matter how causeless and wrong, leads to suspicion and slander. The mind, troubled with the consciousness of wrong-doing, seeks relief by self-justification, and to gain this relief, is compelled to think and believe evil of those it has unjustly wronged. In precisely this relation do mankind stand towards God. They are enemies for no reason whatever and are thus thrown upon the necessity of some means for impeaching the King they causelessly hate. Hence the need of making such revelations of God to man as shall melt his hard heart under the manifestations of divine love.

As another great means of accomplishing the end in view, Christ must needs atone for sin, so that it can be freely forgiven. This He did most effectually. In Christ both parties in this great controversy are represented. Human nature was there and also the divine. God in human flesh met all the exigencies of the case and satisfied every demand of the emergency.

On our part faith is the great condition of being saved. The longer I live, the more clearly I see that faith refers especially to the divinity of Christ, embracing practically His power to save and fully admitting that the case is one for which no power short of divine is adequate. "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" Do you believe that I can raise your dead, heal your sick, cast out your devils, remit your sins? Do you believe all this? Then if so, cast yourself on My power to save. The substance of faith then is this--believing in Christ as the true God, and confiding in Him as such. Faith confides in Him as to all He professes to be and to do. It is presupposed that the mind apprehends the nature and design of God's love, and then faith receives this as truth, believing that in very deed Jesus Christ loved me, gave Himself for me, died for me that I might not die but live. Thus each believing soul for itself meets God in Jesus Christ and yields itself up to God in reliance upon His promises. A full, unreserved submission seems none too much. With all the heart, the man commits himself to Christ to be used, and governed--to be sanctified and to be saved.

Many treat Christ as if He were a hypocrite. I do not mean that they say so, but in their heart they think so, and what they think determines their treatment of Him. They really feel as if they could put no confidence in His professions of friendship.

Let me put this point to test with you. Have you ever realized that Christ came to save YOU, as truly as if you were the only sinner in the universe? Have you met Him in this relation, as if you understood that He actually came to save you, yourself alone! But this is the true idea of faith. It believes Christ's word of promise and of proffered mercy as applying to your own individual soul.

Faith implies a full renunciation of selfishness. Such renunciation is fully involved in the idea of self-committal to God.

Another element of faith should command our particular regard. It not only believes the history of the past respecting Christ, but also embraces especially all that it finds revealed of His present and future relations. Sinners often believe the past without believing unto salvation, for they do not believe the present and the future. They say--No doubt Christ once lived and ultimately died, but all this took place a great many years ago and a great way off. After His resurrection, He went to heaven--and there the scope of their faith comes to an end. There is nothing fresh and new in it--nothing that touches the great interest of the soul in its own salvation. It is taken up and thought of as any other fragment of ancient history.

But real faith comes nearer home--much nearer. It takes hold of a present Christ--a Savior living now--yea, ever living at God's right hand and ever making intercession there. Did you ever realize that you have been kept out of hell thus long by Christ's intercession? He Himself has illustrated the case in the parable of the barren fig tree. Spare the sinner, he cries; don't cut him down yet; save him, let Me bring him once more into the house of God and under the sound of the gospel; it may be he will repent; if not--if every hopeful effort fails, then let him be cut down, but not before. Then let none of you sinners suppose that Christ has lost His interest in you; far from it. He still prays for you, and still holds you up from sinking into hell. You lay down on your bed last night and slept sweetly; yet the only reason you did not sink down quick into hell, was, not that you prayed but that Christ prayed. Jesus Christ, when your heart was all prayerless, lifted up His voice in your behalf and cried, oh, spare him yet once more--I will carry him up to the house of God again; if this fails, then cut him down!

Once more only,--true faith not only expects forgiveness for all the past, but grace for all the future. Its trustful voice says--"His grace shall be sufficient for me as He has said."

REMARKS.

1. Faith is a natural condition of your salvation. By this I mean that it is in the very nature of the case an indispensable condition. If you will not credit what Christ says of Himself and of the offers of salvation, all else that you may do is of not the least avail. So says our text. God gave up His Son, not to save all men unconditionally--not to save the rich, not the titled, not the learned, as such; not to save the externally moral, or the socially amiable, as such; but to save just all those and none others but those who should believe on Him. Of course this settles the question and shows conclusively who will and who will not be saved by Jesus Christ.

2. Your selfishness is that which makes it so difficult for you to conceive aright of these things. You never loved your enemies: you never make any sacrifice of your own ease or pleasure for their good--but God does. Hence you find it difficult if not impossible to understand God's benevolence--it is so unlike your own selfishness.

Christ prays for you--has done and still does--and yet you are cruelly slow to believe it. But consider how He beheld Jerusalem and wept over it. He had been among them and knew their malignity towards Himself. He saw the whole city becoming deeply excited--sharpening their weapons to slay

Him; yet now as He was coming in for the last time--in the nearest view of the final catastrophe, His heart was deeply moved with pity and compassion. He well knew how much they hated Him and yet He cried out, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem; thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen does her brood under her wings--but ye would not." Another Evangelist says--"He beheld the city and wept over it." He seemed to forget their awful wickedness as if it had never been.

But how can you realize such a state of mind as His? Your selfishness is so great and so controlling that you never have any such feelings yourself towards your enemies. And when you are called on to relinquish your enmity and selfishness, you plead that you can't do it. Hence you are sadly crippled in respect to meeting the condition of faith intelligently. Just as it is one of the most difficult things in the world to make a great liar believe your word however trustworthy, or just, as you cannot persuade a great scoundrel or knave into the course of duty. They don't understand the proper force of the motives you present, and more than all, they do not love to admit sound moral truth home to their heart and conscience. So a thief always suspects others of theft. And on the same principle it becomes sternly difficult for a wicked man to have confidence in God's sincerity and goodness. He may admit it in theory, but still he doesn't believe it and bring it home to his own bosom as a reality.

Now look at the case. See what God has done to provide for your salvation, and also see how much He has said and done to lead you to believe it--but alas, your heart is still heavy as lead with unbelief! What more can God do to make you realize it? O tell me, what more? Sinners will stand and look on the cross itself, and still say--"I cannot realize that this is all compassion for me--I cannot believe that all this came of love for my soul." How then can God persuade you to believe in His loving-kindness?

3. Faith in Christ will give you peace. Of this you need not and methinks you cannot have the least doubt. Are you then willing to receive the intelligence, that God gave His Son for you as individuals? So His own word declares. "God, having raised up His Son, Jesus, sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Therefore make no delay. Rouse up all the energies of your soul to this work--at once.

4. Sinners are not apt to distinguish between Christ given and Christ received. Christ given is one thing; Christ received is quite another. God has in great love given the donation: have you accepted it? It avails you nothing until you do. Believing on Him is accepting Him as given. Of a long time you have known that the offer of Jesus as your Savior has been made you. Have you cared anything about it? Have you had one feeling of gratitude to express to God for His unspeakable gift? Have you ever uttered one word of gratitude? Have you ever come before God with the first note of thanksgiving? How does your ingratitude look even in your own eyes? And if you are ashamed of it yourself, how must you suppose it appears in the eyes of your Savior?

Suppose Jesus Christ were to come into this house while you are sitting here. You know by the halo of glory about His head that it can be none other than the Lord of glory whom you have so long rejected. He shows you the prints of the nails in His hands and feet--the wound of the spear in His side, and coming near where you sit, He asks you with a look of tenderest compassion,--Is all this nothing to you? Do you know who I am? Yes, Do you know what I want of you? Yes. Am I worthy of your confidence? I suppose so. Then, will you give yourself up to Me, trusting My word and grace to save

you and devoting yourself heartily to My cause? O, you answer, I don't feel enough. But He replies, I have come to save you. This matter has been debated long enough, and it is time you should tell Me honestly what your final decision is. We must conclude this matter now, and whatever your decision may be, I shall write it down and put the judgment seal upon it. And now, under these circumstances, what will you do? Will you say--Go Thy way for this time? But if I do for this time, I return no more to bless you. I shall pray for you no more. All your day and scope for mercy will pass away. You know I have dealt in all honesty with you to save your soul if I can. I have sought to show you your enmity of heart against Me, and have implored you to put it all away and give Me your heart--will you do it even now, though it be your eleventh hour of mercy?

Sinner, do you understand this appeal? Doubtless you do. Christ is trying to win you--He would fain persuade you to save your soul. Will you be persuaded? Will you decide the momentous question this hour? If you knew that your present decision would be final, how would you make it? Let me tell you, it MAY be final;--therefore take care what you do! "There is a point beyond which forbearance is no virtue"--beyond which even God cannot forbear, for virtue forbids it. Remember that this is the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and if you sin willfully against Him, He may never forgive you. But do you say--The Holy Ghost is not now with me. Beware what you say! Has not some influence, other than your own mind, convinced you of sin? Must you not admit that by some means, you have seen your sins as you have rarely done before, and have been pressed to come to Christ for pardon? Then now is your time. You ought to consider that this may be your last time. Why then will you not cry out--O Jesus, take my heart; O take it wholly, and seal it Thine forevermore!

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)*.