

What Saith the Scripture?

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Harden Not Your Heart- No. 2

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from "The Oberlin Evangelist" Publication of Oberlin College

Lecture VI
March 27, 1861

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Text.--Heb. 3: 7,8: "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

In speaking from these words I inquire,

I. What is it to harden the heart?

II. How men harden their hearts.

III. The guilt involved in hardening the heart against God.

IV. The danger of hardening the heart against God.

I. What is it to harden the heart?

It is to commit the will or mind against the claims of God and of humanity. To harden the heart is to commit the soul in a spirit of disobedience, and self-will, and stubbornness, against God and His government.

II. How men harden their hearts.

- 1. It is always a voluntary act to harden the heart, and a voluntary state when the hardness of heart is continued.

It is being an act of the mind or of the will, the mind always assigns to itself some reason for taking this position of self-will, and for maintaining this position of stubbornness against God. It is a matter of consciousness that the will has indirectly a great control of the feelings. If the mind commits itself by an act of will to any position, the feelings are brought to adjust themselves to the will's position; not always directly and instantly, but

the feelings will soon come to sympathize with the attitude taken by the will. The reason is very obvious, the feelings are influenced by the thoughts, and the thoughts are directed by the will. When the will, then, is committed to a dishonest position, it will always use the intellect dishonestly; and by a dishonest use of the intellect will foster such thoughts as to prevent the feelings. This is common experience, as every one knows who has paid any particular attention to his own state of mind. A voluntary stubbornness always locks up the sensibility, and closes it against that class of emotions that would naturally result from a different attitude of the will. If the mind takes a position against God, it will use the intellect to justify its position, or to excuse it; consequently it will indulge only in thoughts, and arguments, and reflections, that justify its position, and therefore that poison and pervert the feelings and bring them into sympathy with the will. Men harden their hearts, then, by an uncandid and selfish use of the intellect, assigning to themselves such reasons for their conduct as to justify their taking this position.

- 2. Men harden their hearts by indulging prejudice against God. They commit themselves to a one-sided view of the whole question of God's claims, and government, and works. They are selfish, and therefore not candid. They designedly take a narrow view of all the questions between themselves and God, and indulge a host of prejudices with intent to justify their rebellious state of mind.
- 3. They often harden their hearts by indulging prejudices against the church, against the ministry, against the truth. Press them to repent, and you will find in fact that they immediately betake themselves to finding fault with Christians and ministers. You will find their minds a perfect nest of prejudices against God's people; and they evidently resort to these as a reason for their position in regard to religion, to justify themselves in neglecting the claims of God. You cannot go and talk with one of these impenitent men without finding that he will instantly reveal to you a perfect nest of prejudices, which he harbors in his mind against God's people, and ministers, and truth, for the purpose of strengthening himself in his position of disobedience.

I say, these are prejudices -- they are pre-judgments. There may be some foundation in fact for many things which he will say; but upon the whole you will clearly perceive that it is prejudice. He is unfair, uncandid. Much that he says is not true; though he persuades himself that it is true. He has not fairly and charitably examined the subject. He has jumped to a conclusion from a very partial examination of the facts, and is hedging himself in with prejudice. This course of conduct, with those that harden their hearts, is so notorious that you will find it on every side. When this meeting is out, converse with your impenitent neighbors, and you will find them resorting to these prejudices to strengthen themselves against the claims of God.

- 4. Men harden their hearts through a pride of consistency. They have taken a stand; they have committed themselves in something; they have set themselves against religion and against the claims of God. And it is remarkable to see, if you converse with an impenitent person before others, and especially in the presence of those before whom they have taken a stand and committed themselves against God's claims, how they will instantly gather up their strength, and through pride of consistency maintain their position.

- 5. Men harden their hearts because they are ashamed to forsake the ranks of the ungodly, and openly confess Christ. They are ashamed of Christ, and ashamed of religion; ashamed to avow themselves the friends of God.

This is truly wonderful, but it is a fact. So true is this that you can scarcely find a sinner, with whom you can converse in the presence of his family or friends, that will not resist, because he is ashamed to manifest any feeling on the subject, or any regard for Christ in their presence. You can scarcely find an impenitent man that will allow you to talk with him in the presence of his wife, without resisting your importunity through his own pride.

You must get him alone, and away from his friends, or he will resist you, because he is ashamed to have them know that he has any feeling on the subject of religion. This is almost a universal fact with sinners. I find if I would do them any good in conversation, I need to see them alone. They have scarcely a friend before whom they will be candid enough to acknowledge the truth as they really believe it. So great is the pride of their hearts, that they are ashamed to have it known, even to those who are most interested in them, that they pay the least regard to the claims of God.

- 6. Men harden their hearts through an unwillingness to confess and make restitution where they have wronged their neighbors. They are too proud to confess a wrong to a neighbor; and they are too selfish to make restitution where they have taken an advantage of another in trade, or where they have in their possession that which belongs to another. If, therefore, they have any restitution to make, or any confession to make to man, this consideration will lead them to gird themselves, and to resist the claims of duty and of God. They will often keep themselves for years in an attitude of stubbornness, because they know that if they yield to God, they must make confession and restitution. Now, is not this the fact with some of you? Are you not covering some sin that ought to be confessed to man, as well as to God? Are you not refusing to make some restitution where you have wronged some one?

Do you not know that if you ever repent, you must confess and make restitution? And whenever the question of repentance comes before you, do you not gird and strengthen yourself in your impenitence? Do you not harden your heart, because you know that if you repent, you must make confession and restitution? Do you not often resort to cavils and subterfuges, to strengthen yourself in the attitude you hold towards God?

- 7. Men harden their hearts by yielding to their temper. If you press them with the claims of God, they become angry; and giving way to temper, they take a stronger stand than ever, and gird themselves to the uttermost to resist the claims of duty and of God.

They will sometimes go so far as to affirm, and even to swear, that they will never become Christians; they will not yield to the claims of God, do what He may. Have not some of you, when pressed by the claims of God, given way to anger, strengthened yourself in your position, and resolved that you would have nothing to do with the claims of God?

- 8. Sinners often harden their hearts by indulging appetite. For example: they are accustomed to

the use of tobacco, or intoxicating drinks; or they are accustomed to indulge in the use of various luxuries. Now if the claims of God are presented to them, those claims come directly into competition with appetite. For example: I heard of a man, who, through the use of intoxicating drinks, was likely to lose his eye-sight. His physician told him that he must abandon the use of intoxicating drinks, or entirely lose the use of his eyes. Upon this information he girded himself instantly, and said, "Then fare you well, old eyes." Thus he settled the question, hardened his heart, and probably lost his soul.

- 9. Men harden their hearts through the "fear of man that bringeth a snare." You often see cases in which persons are called to the performance of duty, and resist the claims of duty through the fear of man. If in meeting, those who are anxious are invited to come forward and take a certain seat, or to go into another room for instruction, if they are aware that certain persons are present, though greatly pressed with the claims of God, they will harden their hearts and refuse to go.
- 10. Men harden their heart in obedience to public sentiment. If the claims of God come into collision with the views and practices of men on a large scale, so that public sentiment is strongly adverse to the claims of God, many men will bow right down before public sentiment and harden their hearts against God. They are afraid to take a stand against men, when in their wickedness they will take a stand against God. With most men public sentiment is omnipotent, and has far more power with them practically than all the claims of God. And whenever they are called to resist public sentiment and to sympathize with the claims of God, they gird themselves and resist God's claims.
- 11. Men harden their hearts by indulging erroneous views of God and His government. In this they are uncandid; but nevertheless they persist in charging certain things upon God, in stumbling at certain things in God's providence, or government, or dealings. They hedge themselves round about with lies, and hide themselves under falsehood, and thus strengthen themselves in their opposition to God.
- 12. The same is true of religion generally. It is striking, and awful sometimes, to see what views men will persist in entertaining of religion. Their perverseness in this respect is sometimes appalling. Hear them talk, and it would seem they must have been assisted by Satan himself to conjure up so much that is false, ridiculous, absurd, and often wicked, and charge it to religion.
- 13. Men often harden their hearts through a proud determination to receive nothing incomprehensible. They will not believe, they say, what they cannot understand. But this they apply only to religion and the claims of God. They cannot comprehend their own existence; and there is nothing in all nature around them that is not full of mystery, as absolutely beyond their comprehension as any mystery in religion. They can swallow an ocean of mystery on any other subject. But come to religion, the claims of God, the high policy of His eternal government, the mode of His own existence, and those great and wonderful things too high for us, where mystery is to be expected of course -- there, the sinner will stumble; there he proudly entrenches himself, and says, "I will not believe what I cannot understand" -- meaning, that unless he can understand the philosophy and the how, he will not believe the facts.

- 14. Men harden their hearts by withholding confidence in God. Unbelief is their great crime. If God takes never so much pains to gain their confidence, they proudly and persistently withhold it, and thus harden their hearts against God.
- 15. Men often harden their hearts by withholding confidence in man. They seem to throw away their confidence in everybody; and with the psalmist in his haste, they say, "All men are liars." Now, whenever you find a man who has lost confidence in everybody, you may know that he himself is a wicked man. This is exactly the opposite of the good man's state of mind. "Charity hopeth all things, and believeth all things." The truly good man may be too confiding. He is himself truthful, and not ready to suspect others of being false. He is himself honest and simple-hearted, and not in a state easily to suspect others of double-dealing and dishonesty. He loves everybody, and therefore wishes to think well of everybody. He is disposed to do so, and it is very easy and natural for him to do so. His error will naturally be in the excess of confidence. He will confide, sometimes, where he has not reason to confide. He has more confidence in man than man is entitled to; and this from the very nature of his simple-heartedness, of his own conscious honesty.

Whenever, therefore, you see a man that has no confidence in anybody, you may know that he deserves the confidence of nobody; he is a wicked man. "Charity thinketh no evil;" is not pre-disposed to think evil of others, but the contrary. It is a wicked man who hardens himself by casting away his confidence in man. You go to some men with the claims of God -- they immediately resist everything you say, because everybody who professes religion, is a hypocrite.

- 16. Some men harden their hearts through a habit of self-will. They have never been governed by their parents; they have never really submitted themselves to anybody's government; consequently they are in the habit of having their own way. To government of any kind, they will not submit. Persuade them, especially in the sense of flattering them, you sometimes may, to some extent; but the moment the idea of authority is presented to them, even if it be the authority of God, they resist it, because the claim comes in that shape. Their will is always girded; it is up, and strong, the moment anything comes before them as an obligation -- something to which they ought to submit. To moral obligation they have never yielded; and the moment it comes before them in the shape of an "ought," they resist it.
- 17. Many harden their hearts through a habit of delay. They have long put off the claims of God; they have indulged in this from their earliest childhood; and it has become a thing of course. They have heard sermon after sermon, have had the claims of duty presented so often and so long, and have been so uniform in their habit of delay, that now it is a thing of course. You press them never so hard, and they will say, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Is this not a fact with some of you? Have you not so long accustomed yourselves to put off God's claims that it has become with you a thing of course? When you came to meeting today, you expected to hear the claims of God: but did you expect to comply with them, to yield to these claims? Did you not as much expect to set the church on fire

today, as you expected to become a Christian, and yield to the claims of God today? Did you not as much expect to reject these claims, as you expected to hear them presented? You did expect to be presented with them: but did you not as much expect to delay obedience as you expected to live? Such has been your habit of delay, that when God's claims are urged, you instantly repeat what you have so often done; you gird yourself and go your way, resisting these claims.

- 18. Many resist the claims of God through spiritual indolence. They are too spiritually indolent to make any effort for their own salvation, or to comply with the claims of God. These claims come home upon them, and press them to instant action and decision; but it is easier to resist them, as they have been in the habit of doing so long, than to comply. They have only to gird themselves up, to remain in disobedience. But to rule out every objection, and break down before God, will cause them more effort than they are disposed to make; hence they draw themselves up in the attitude of resistance, and growl out their "Nay," to the claims of God.
- 19. Men often harden their hearts on account of the real or supposed sins of professors of religion. These sins may be real, or they may be only supposed; nevertheless, they are made the occasion of caviling, and of resistance to God's claims. Such a man has wronged them, or wronged somebody else; such a professor has done so and so. He betakes himself to these by way of strengthening himself in his position. He "eats up the sins of God's people as he eats bread, and will not call on the name of the Lord." Sometimes in dealing with them he has supposed them to be selfish.

Perhaps they have been so; perhaps they have manifested an unchristian spirit and temper. If they have been wrong; if they have wronged God and dishonored Him; strange to tell, sinners will gird themselves, justify their position to God, and will harden their hearts, because God's professed people have dishonored Him.

- 20. Men will often harden their hearts on account of the censoriousness of professors of religion. They have heard professors of religion find fault with other professors of religion, speaking censoriously of them, and thus prejudicing them against professors of religion in general. I have often been struck with the fact that the children of censorious parents are seldom converted.

Especially if the parents are professors of religion, and if they are in the habit of speaking freely of the faults of others, real or supposed, before their children, and particularly if they speak of the faults of professors of religion and complain of ministers, their children will always harden their hearts. If you approach them on the subject of religion, they have been poisoned to death by their censorious parents. Father, or mother, or both, have said so and so about their minister, about such a one, and such a one; and this is made by them an occasion of strengthening themselves and hardening their hearts against God. I know a family where censoriousness, I am sorry to say, seems to be the whole of their conversation. The mother, especially, thinks almost all professors of religion hypocrites; particularly those in the place where she lives.

Her mouth is full of complainings of the members of the church to which she belongs; or

at least of the church in the neighborhood in which she resides. Her children, consequently, are entirely opposed to religion. They have no confidence in it; they laugh, and even scoff at it; and although the mother herself is a professor of religion, by her censoriousness she has taught them to despise it. This is awful; but so it is. Parents cannot do their children a greater injury than by allowing themselves to be censorious.

They really do them a greater mischief than Satan can do them. They are in fact more the enemies of the souls of their children than the devil himself is. They have something to say against almost every professor of religion. The deacons of course are all wrong; the minister neglects them, they say; and as for the business men of the church, they are all defrauders or defaulters; and as for the women, they are all out of the way. Nobody is right; the church are all hypocrites; and this their children are taught to believe. Now how could the devil do worse than this? You may almost as well go into a nest of serpents to try to make an impression on them with truth, as into a family where they are censorious. You will find the household, from the oldest to the youngest, hardening their hearts; and the moment you approach them, they begin to pour forth their prejudices and their complaints against others.

- 21. Sinners still more frequently harden their hearts by yielding to their own censorious tendencies. They have a bitter, sour spirit themselves. They are selfish, and suspect everybody else of being selfish.

Judging others by themselves, they have little confidence in anybody, and are strongly disposed to attribute the worst motives to almost everybody. This is the tendency of some minds; and they often harden their hearts by indulging this spirit. They grieve and resist the Spirit of God by the free manner in which they let their tongues loose and slander their neighbors.

- 22. Men harden their hearts by holding fast their schemes of ambition. They mark out for themselves certain courses of life, and propose to accomplish certain ends. These ends are selfish; nevertheless, they commit themselves to realize them. The moment you bring before them the claims of God, and they are seen to conflict with the carrying out of their ambitious schemes, they immediately resist.

For a time, I did so myself. Success in my profession was a thing to which I had committed myself; and I was aware that if I became a Christian, I might be called to preach the Gospel. At any rate, I thought I could not, for conscience's sake, successfully carry out my ambitious projects in my profession. This, for a time, was conclusive against my yielding to the claims of God. I girded myself, and hardened my heart, and resisted these claims for a season, that I might carry out and realize my ambitious projects.

- 23. Men often harden their hearts through fear of being ridiculed, or persecuted, if they become religious.

Sometimes they have friends to whom they are strongly attached, and to whom they stand

committed not to become religious. I have known cases of this kind, where persons were found to be committed to their irreligious, and perhaps skeptical friends; and they would withstand the claims of God, and harden their hearts like an adamant stone, because of these committals to their ungodly friends.

- 24. Sometimes through strong attachments, and entanglements in love affairs, men will harden their hearts against God. Lovers are very apt to withstand the claims of God, unless the parties can mutually agree to become Christians. Sometimes husbands and wives will each withstand the claims of God, because the other party is not a Christian. I have known cases repeatedly, where the wife would resist the claims of God, because her husband was not a Christian; and the husband would resist the claims of God, because his wife was not a Christian. Indeed, in some instances, I have known them to affirm that they would rather go to hell with an unconverted companion, than to be saved without them.

A lady of decided standing in society once told me that she was not going to become a Christian; that it would destroy all family happiness; and she would sooner go to hell with her unconverted husband, than give up her sympathy with him in his impenitence and become a Christian.

Sometimes they fear persecution from the other party, or from friends, or from enemies; and will, therefore, harden their hearts whenever the claims of God are presented.

- 25. Sometimes sinners harden their hearts through the insane assumption that Christians will triumph over them, if they submit to the claims of God. I know a young lady, who, when pressed with the claims of God, after weighing the matter for a time, decided against these claims and hardened her heart, because she said that a certain Christian lady who had talked often with her, and prayed much with her, would triumph over her if now she became a Christian.

"I will not submit," says she, "for mother so and so," naming her, "will shout, 'victory, victory through the blood of the Lamb,' I will not have Christians triumph over me, that I have at last submitted."

- 26. Sinners often harden their hearts, because it does not suit their present convenience to repent and become Christians. They are determined to make no sacrifice, and to be at no pains to become Christians at present. They have some objections; therefore, they treat the claims of God contemptuously, and intend to harden their hearts against Him, until it is in all respects convenient for them to yield to His claims.
- 27. Sinners often harden their hearts through a spirit of presumption. As the Bible says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." This fully setting the heart is the same as hardening the heart. They think there is time enough; they presume that God will wait upon them; that they shall live long, or at any rate, shall not die speedily. They, therefore, resolve upon putting it off, presuming that there will be time enough before they die; and thus they trifle with the claims of God, commit the horrible sin of presumption, and often bring upon themselves swift

destruction.

III. I will briefly consider the guilt involved in hardening the heart against God.

- 1. Observe that it is a voluntary act, and an act of direct resistance against God's most righteous claims. It is a direct refusal to obey and acknowledge duty to the blessed God; and is, therefore, as dishonest and wicked as possible. It is saying to God, "I know the claim is just, but I cannot pay it."

And, then, to aggravate the guilt of this hardening of the heart, resort is had to reasons the most ridiculous, unreasonable, and blasphemous. Just consider all the reasons to which I have alluded, for a man's hardening himself against the claims of God. In every case the reason assigned for resisting God's claims is but adding an insult to an injury. First to refuse to obey God, and then to assign such reasons for disobedience, is a direct and horrible insult to the blessed God.

- 2. It is a direct resistance to His earnest and honest offers of mercy. The sinner is not satisfied with refusing to obey God; he is not satisfied to trample on His authority and His law, and to harden himself against every commandment of God; he also directly resists and pours contempt upon His offers of mercy. And he not only resists the commands, but the importunities and entreaties of God.

God commands, expostulates, entreats, beseeches, urges by every moving consideration; pours His love and mercy as an ocean around him; but he hardens himself against them all, contemns alike justice and mercy. Present to him the commands and threatenings of God, and he hardens himself, and says, he is not going to be moved by threatenings, he is not going to submit to authority. Present to him the compassion, the urgent mercy of God, and then he will cavil, that he does not deserve the punishment supposed in the offer of mercy; or, Christians have done something wrong. Thus he will resort to every miserable and provoking shift conceivable, to justify himself in rejecting mercy.

- 3. It is setting the worst possible example; and example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted. Actions speak more emphatically than words.

If a man resists the claims of God, he virtually invites all others, over whom he has influence, to resist these claims also. He need not say in words, "Come, let us resist the claims of God;" to persist in resisting them himself, is the loudest call on others to resist them, of which he is capable. No thanks to the sinner if God has a virtuous subject in His kingdom. The man that hardens his heart against God, does the utmost he can to lead all others to do so.

- 4. But what is the real guilt involved in this course? Wherein does the guilt of this dishonesty consist? I answer, it consists in its being a violation of our obligation to love God and our neighbor; that is, to exercise good-will to God and our neighbor.

Now, how great is our obligation to love God and our neighbor? I answer, it is as great as God's desire of our love; it is as great as His righteous claim upon our obedience; it is as

great as the intrinsic value of the good of Himself and His universe which He requires us to will. The fundamental reason why we would will the good of God and His universe, is the intrinsic value of this good to God and His universe. This is the fundamental reason that imposes the obligation on us. It is the intrinsic value of this good, in view of which God commands us to will it. Now, if this is the reason we should will it, if this reason imposes the obligation, the obligation is as great and broad as the reason that imposes it.

Now the reason that imposes the obligation, or the consideration in view of which the mind affirms the obligation, is the intrinsic value of the good of God and the universe. This good we necessarily affirm to be of infinite value; the obligation, therefore, is infinitely broad; and we ourselves cannot but affirm that there is no limit to our obligation to love God, to obey Him and confide in Him. The guilt, then, of refusing to comply with this obligation must be as great as the obligation; and the obligation must be equal to the reason that imposes it.

But the considerations that impose the obligation are absolutely infinite; there can, therefore, be no bounds to the guilt of hardening the heart against the claims of God.

IV. I will notice briefly the danger of hardening the heart against God.

- 1. It is dangerous, because, if you continue it, you will never be converted.
- 2. The fact is, the course you are pursuing, sinner, is an insane war upon your own soul.
- 3. The same is true if you are a backslider; if you harden your heart and continue to do so, it will surely be fatal to you. There is no power in the universe that can save you, if you will persist in hardening your heart against God.
- 4. It is dangerous, because you have already contracted the habit of hardening yourself; and it is of course more natural for you to do it now, than it was at first. Indeed it has become highly probable, that with respect to many of you, you never will do otherwise than to continue to harden your heart till you find yourselves in hell.
- 5. You are in great danger of being given up of God. If you read the verses in connection with the text you will see that this is the use the apostle makes of the conduct of the Jews. They continued to harden their hearts against God, during their journey in the wilderness. They would murmur through unbelief, and strengthen themselves in their unreasonable prejudices and opposition. God bore with their manners for a long time; and finally brought them up to the borders of the promised land, and commanded them to go up and take possession. They had frequently hardened their hearts before; but now, doubtless, they thought God had borne with them so long that they might tempt Him once more; and they hardened their hearts against Him once more. They sent up spies, and these came back and reported that they were unable to go up and possess the land. This produced a murmur and a hardening of heart throughout the whole camp of Israel. The time had arrived for God to make this generation an example. He swore in His wrath that they never should enter into His rest; He turned them back and wasted their carcasses in the wilderness.

Hear again, then, what He says, "He limited a certain day; as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

Some of you have often hardened your hearts against the claims of the mercy of God. If you do it today again, it may seal your doom. If you go from this house hardening your heart today, it may be the Lord will lift up His hand and swear that you shall never enter into His rest. I beseech you, therefore, I conjure you by the mercies of God, that today you hear His voice, and harden not your heart.

REMARKS.

1. In the light of this subject we can see why so many persons have little or no religious feeling. The fact is, their will is committed in the attitude of disobedience and self-seeking; consequently they divert their thoughts from all that class of truths that would make them feel.
 2. Please remember that men are the authors of their own hardness of heart. Sinners often complain of their hardness of heart, as if it was not of their own creation. They speak of it as if it were not their own persistent act. In such cases, they mean by hardness of heart simply the apathy of their sensibility, their want of feeling. But this is only a result, a natural consequence of the hardness of their hearts. It is the stubbornness of their will, their willfulness, that constitutes the hardness of their hearts; and, as we have seen, this want of feeling is a result. To be sure, they cannot feel while their will remains girded and embraced in its opposition to God. Or, if they do feel, their feelings will be those of remorse, and regret, and agony; the tender emotions cannot be brought into exercise while they harden themselves, and make their wills obstinate in resistance to God.
 3. We see many persons trying to feel by making efforts to feel; trying to excite emotions of sorrow, and love, and gratitude, while the controversy is not yielded, so far as the attitude of their will is concerned. They have not submitted themselves to God, have not adjusted themselves in His will, have not yielded the controversy; and yet they are endeavoring to feel as if they had yielded the controversy. Their voluntary stubbornness remains, and they are vainly endeavoring to feel.
- This, I, fear, is the case with many of you. You complain that you do not feel; you spend your time in trying to feel. You would feel sorrow for your sins, while you persist in holding fast to them. You would force the tender emotions towards God into exercise, while your will cruelly braces itself against Him. In this you labor in vain, and spend your strength for naught.
4. By what innumerable shifts men harden their hearts and secure their own damnation. I might as well preach a month as an hour, in enumerating the innumerable ways in which men manage to harden their hearts against God. Men manifest a kind of infernal sagacity and cunning in resorting to every possible excuse that shall justify their stubbornness towards their heavenly Father. They make constant resistance to His claims and offers of mercy.
 5. Sinners use their free agency, even the whole strength of it, to resist their own salvation. This is the only reason why men are lost. Christ has died for all men, and offers salvation to all.

The fact that men have sinned, is no sufficient reason that they should be lost; but if they will harden

their hearts against the claims and mercies of God, it is impossible for Him to save them.

It is forever impossible, in the nature of the case, that a man should be forced to submit to the claims of God. God cannot by any possibility force him to heaven. Forced action is not moral action. Where force begins, moral action ends.

No moral change, or change involving moral character, can possibly take place in man without his own free consent; and every change implies the power of resisting any possible amount of motive that can be presented. Let no man suppose that God will ever, or can, by any possibility, force his will, in making him a Christian.

And now, sinner, I conjure you to remember, that if you persist in hardening your heart, you render your salvation impossible, even to God Himself.

If you harden your heart as you have done, if you persist in this course but a little longer, your judgment which now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation that slumbereth not, will overtake you. O, will you remember this? will you lay it to heart? will you be wise, and this day hear His voice, and no longer harden your hearts?

6. How astonishing is the long-suffering of God? How many ways have you hardened your hearts against Him! How many times have you betaken yourselves to the most absurd, unreasonable, provoking reasons for girding yourself and resisting the claims of God! And God's forbearance is still lengthened out, even to this long-suffering! Will it not suffice you thus far to have resisted the mercy and compassion of God? I beseech you, now let the controversy cease. Lay down your weapons; accept God's claims; humble yourself under His mighty hand; lay down your sins, and accept the offer of eternal life.

But let me ask, if today you refuse to hear His voice, and again harden your heart, will you have any reason to complain if God gives you up to a reprobate mind, and lifts up His hand and swears that you shall never enter into His rest? Will you have any claim upon God, if now today, after so long a time, you harden your heart? Can you object if His Spirit is withdrawn, and the offer of mercy is made no more!

Take care what you do! Act in view of the solemn judgment! Remember what the text speaks to you, "Today, after so long a time, saith the Holy Ghost, as it is said, Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

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)*.