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# "The Oberlin Evangelist"

Publication of Oberlin College

Sermons and Lectures given in 1841

by

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## GLOSSARY

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

## Submission to God- No.'s 1 & 2

Lectures XXV & XXVI

January 16, 1841

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

LECTURE XXV.

Text.--James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God."

In the discussion of this subject I shall inquire:

*I. What constitutes submission to God.*

*II. Point out some things that are implied in submission.*

*III. Notice various delusions which many practice upon themselves, in respect to submission.*

*IV. Show that without true submission salvation is naturally impossible.*

*V. Show that with true submission salvation is naturally inevitable.*

**I. What constitutes submission to God.**

- 1. I begin by remarking, that submission belongs to the will; and that true submission consists in the will's being entirely subdued and under the control of God's will. It is just that attitude of will, or that voluntary state of the will that God requires. This includes,
- 2. A joyful acquiescence in all the providence of God. There is perhaps no man, however wicked, and perhaps no devil in hell, that is not pleased with some of the providences of God, because they may favor their ambitious and selfish schemes. The assassin, who prowls at midnight to plunge a dagger into his neighbor's heart, might be very willing that God's providence should favor him with a dark and stormy night, when few persons would be abroad to detect his foul deed of blood. The pirate, also, might rejoice in a fair wind, or in any other providence that might favor his diabolical designs. Satan himself might rejoice at some providential dispensation that may give him the opportunity of extending his rebellious operations against God. The farmer, though a wicked man, may rejoice in such weather as favors his peculiar occupation. And thus the worst, as well as the best of men, may be very much pleased with the providence of God, so long as it favors their particular designs. But there is no piety in this. One element of true submission, is, as I have said, a joyful acquiescence in the whole providence of God. A truly submissive soul cannot know what an adverse providence is; for it has no will of its own, only that the will of God shall be done. And consequently, whatever the weather is, whatever the providential occurrences with which he is surrounded may be, as these occurrences show what is upon the whole the will of God, he is well pleased with them, equally well, whatever they may be. If in any thing, the providence of God interferes

with what the submissive soul had intended to do, it is just as well pleased as if the providence had been different; for the intention to do a certain thing, to go to a certain place, or attempt any thing whatever, is founded upon the supposition, that such is the will of God. But if the providence of God is found to be adverse to the carrying out any such intention, it is regarded by that soul as a revelation from God, that that intention was not according to his will; in which case he is just as well pleased to relinquish his design, and pursue any course that at present seems to be according to the will of God, as he would have been to have pursued the intended course, which has proved to be adverse to the providence and will of God. Having no other intention than to do the whole will of God, he is perfectly and supremely satisfied with whatever the providence of God may be. He has no interest of his own to promote, no ends of his own to accomplish--no ways, or schemes, or wishes, but such as he believes to be in accordance with the will of God. He, therefore, waits, in an attitude as yielding as air, to be led in a state of supreme sweetness and complacency, in any direction in which the will of God, as revealed in his providence, by his Spirit and word, shall lead him. Equally well pleased, to be sick or well--to be rich or poor--to live or die--to enjoy his friends or part with them--to be employed in any way, in any place, at any time, wherever the providence of God shall lead him.

- 3. Another element of true submission is, a cordial, joyful, and actual obedience to all the known will of God. There is, perhaps, no man and no devil so wicked or in such circumstances as not to find it for their interest to do many things required by God. And although they do not do these things in obedience to the will of God, yet they give themselves credit for good behavior, as if they really did. And indeed, they are very well pleased, that God should require such things as these, because it so happens that the letter of these requirements coincides with what they find to be most agreeable to themselves, and most for their own interest, under the circumstances in which they are placed. Now in doing these things it is manifest that there is no virtue, from the fact that they do not do them because God requires them, but solely because this course of conduct is most in accordance, under the circumstances of the case, with the selfish ends they have in view. But true submission, let it be for ever understood, consists in a spirit of universal obedience to the whole will of God, because it is his will. It regards the will of God, on all subjects, as supremely good, and just as good on one subject as another. It is necessarily under the control of the will of God, and has no end in view, but in every thing to be directed by the will of God. Nothing is so dear, nothing so desirable, nothing so desired, as to have the whole will of God done on earth as it is done in heaven. Consequently, with a submissive soul there is no picking and choosing among the commandments of God, being better pleased with some than with others, and preferring obedience to one rather than another. To a submissive soul, the revealed will of God, however it may be revealed, whether by his word, providence, or Spirit, is the supreme and universal law, to which it yields a universal and joyful obedience.
- 4. Consequently true submission includes the practical and joyful holding of ourselves and all our possessions and interests at the disposal of the divine will. I say a joyful holding of ourselves and our possessions at his disposal, in opposition to a reluctant yielding, in compliance with the stern demands of conscience, without in reality taking any pleasure in thus doing. I said, a practical holding of ourselves and possessions thus, in opposition to that state of fancied willingness, in which men often profess to be willing to do any thing, when in reality

they will do nothing--in which they profess to hold themselves and all they possess at the disposal of God, but in reality will never suffer Him to dispose of themselves or their possessions, only as he disposes of them by sending them to hell, and of their possessions by putting them into the hands of those that will use them for his glory. By a practical and joyful holding of ourselves and our possessions at his disposal, then, I mean, that as a matter of fact, the whole body, soul, and spirit, time, talents, property, and all things over which we have control, are yielded up to the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world; not grudgingly, or by constraint, but of a ready, willing, joyful mind; finding in this course our supreme joy, and, as a matter of fact, feeling it to be true in our own experience, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

- 5. True submission includes an unconditional assent to be used all up, body and soul, both in time [and] eternity, for the promotion of the best interests of the universe, and the glory of God. God undoubtedly wills that the most should be made of the influence of every moral being, to promote his own glory and the interests of his kingdom; and nothing is submission short of an entire willingness and most intense desire thus to be used up, with the most divine economy, for the promotion of those vast interests upon which the heart of God is set.
- 6. It includes a joyful willingness to have justice take its course with us, if the interests of the universe should demand it. Every sinner in the universe deserves to be in hell; and since it is a fact that sin exists, it is indispensable that there should be a hell, that the justice of God should be vindicated in sending those who sin to hell. And certainly, it is the duty of all who are in hell to be entirely reconciled to their condition.

By this I do not mean, that they are bound to be reconciled to live in sin; for they are able to repent, and are bound to repent, and to love God with all their heart, and with all their soul. But since the interests of the universe demand, and therefore it is the duty of God to send them to hell, they are bound supremely to rejoice in being there; that is--they are bound to be willing, and rejoice to be disposed of in the best possible manner, for the promotion of the interests of the kingdom of God. And since, under the circumstances of the case, the best thing that can be done with them, is to put them in hell, they are bound to be supremely acquiescent in it. Just so in the case of every sinner on earth. He deserves to be put in hell. And if, under the circumstances of the case, this is the best disposition that can be made of him, for the glory of God, and the advancement of his kingdom; if the moral government of God can be better supported by his punishment than by his forgiveness, he is bound not only to consent to be punished, but to be supremely pleased to let justice take its course. By this I do not mean to affirm, that the pains of hell can be chosen for their own sake, or that any pain whatever can or ought to be chosen for its own sake. It is contrary to the very nature of moral beings, and as contrary to the will of God, as it is to the moral constitution of man, that any degree of pain should be chosen for its own sake, either in this or any other world. But while the infliction of pain, on the part of God, is indispensable to the vindication of his character, and the support of his authority, whenever the endurance of pain is demanded by the same end, whether in this or in any other world, true submission consists in choosing and joyfully acquiescing in the endurance of pain, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the end to be accomplished by it. A man is just as much bound to be willing to endure the pains of hell, in vindication

of the moral government of God, should the interests of the universe demand it, as he is to be willing to endure the pains of bodily disease when physical law has been violated, and the vindication of the ways of God demand that he should suffer bodily pain.

He is as much bound to be willing to suffer the pains of hell, in support of the moral government of God, as he is to endure the smarting of a burn, in vindication of the physical government of God, when he has wantonly thrust his hand in the fire.

Let me be understood. I am not saying, that a man should be willing to remain in eternal rebellion against God. I am not saying, that God is as much gratified and pleased with the damnation as with the salvation of sinners. I am not saying, that God's glory demands, or that it is consistent with the glory of God, that any penitent sinner should be damned. I am not saying, that God desires the damnation of any soul, for its own sake. Nor am I saying, that the interests of the universe can be best promoted by the damnation of any one, who can be persuaded to repent and accept salvation.

But I am saying, and do mean to say, that upon the supposition, that any one is so circumstanced as to render it necessary for God to inflict the pains of hell upon him, that it is his bounden duty to be supremely acquiescent it. Suppose that a man has committed the unpardonable sin, or a sin of such a nature that it cannot consistently be forgiven, can it be right for that sinner to be unwilling to have justice take its course in this case? Can it be right for him to make himself miserable, because the supreme good of the universe demands his damnation? Of his own folly he may complain. Of his sin he may and ought to repent, and be unutterably ashamed; but with being thus disposed of for the promotion of the highest interests of God's kingdom, he ought to be supremely pleased. Why, he was made to glorify God. It was always his duty, to desire, above all things, that God might be glorified and the universe benefitted, to consecrate his whole being to the promotion of this end. In this he was always bound to find his supreme happiness. And now, because of his own voluntary wickedness, he has placed himself in such a situation, that the glory of God and the best interests of his kingdom demand, that he should be put in hell, rather than in heaven, has he a right to demur to this--to refuse to be used for the glory of God--to refuse to consecrate his whole being to that which will, in the highest degree, promote this infinitely desirable end? I say again, and do insist, that in such circumstances he is solemnly bound, to consecrate his whole being to the glory of God, and the support of his government, in this particular way, and willingly to lie down upon the bed of eternal death, and give up his whole being to suffering the penalty of the law of God.

- 7. True submission includes a deep and continual longing of soul, that the whole will of God should be done on earth as it is done in heaven. This is the state of mind that God requires, and that Christ directed to be exercised and expressed in prayer to God. This is to be the daily constant language of our souls, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

## **II. Some things that are implied in submission.**

- 1. It implies the actual forsaking of all known sin. It is absurd to say, that an individual has any

degree of true submission to God, and still indulges in the commission of any known sin. To suppose that true submission is consistent with any degree of known sin, is to overlook the very nature of submission. Submission belongs to the will, and consists in the supreme devotion of the heart to the whole known will of God. Now how manifestly absurd it is to say, that a man can be supremely devoted, or submissive to the will of God, and still indulge in some things, or even in one thing that is inconsistent with God's will. Whoever, therefore, among you, lives in the indulgence of any known sin, of heart or life, has not one particle of true religion. This is not a rhetorical flourish. It is not a random, hap-hazard assertion. It is the unalterable truth of God. By this I do not mean, that if a man is sometimes overcome by temptation, and falls into occasional sins, that this demonstrates that his character is that of an unregenerate sinner. But I do mean, that where any form or degree of sin is indulged, where it is habitual, connived at, allowed, and practiced by the mind, there is not one vestige of true religion.

- 2. True submission implies a recognition of the universality of the providence of God. God is actually, or permissively, directly or indirectly concerned in all events; and many persons hide their enmity against God from their own view, by overlooking the fact, that God has in any sense any agency in the providence about which they vex themselves. They ascribe many things to Satan, and to wicked men, and seem to feel that they do right to be angry, and very rebellious, in view of many things that occur, because God has no agency of any kind in them. Now, a submissive spirit views God as so concerned in every thing, as to remain calm, undisturbed and joyful, amid all those occurrences that keep the ungodly in a state of constant fermentation.
- 3. It implies an honest, earnest, and diligent inquiry after the will of God. There are a great many who profess to hold themselves and all their possessions at the disposal of the will of God--who profess a willingness to do, or be, or say any thing that God requires of them. But mark, you will find it impossible to convince them, that any thing inconsistent with their selfish schemes, is the will of God. They profess to hold all their property at the disposal of God; but the agents of benevolent institutions may labor with them for months, without being able to convince them, that it is the will of God, that they should part with their possessions to promote these objects. The attitude of their minds is manifestly such, that they are unwilling to know what is the will of God in relation to the disposal of their possessions. They demand a kind and degree of evidence to satisfy their minds that cannot be had, and ought not to be expected, and would not be demanded by them, if they were in any other than a supremely selfish state of mind. And thus, while they profess to hold themselves and all they possess at God's disposal, they can always manage to quiet their consciences, in their superlative selfishness, by shutting out the light, and refusing to be satisfied in respect to what really is the will of God.

I knew a man who professed to be converted, and to give all his property to God. At one time he was about to devote it to one benevolent object, and at another to another object; and thus has excited hopes and expectations, sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another, that he would give up at least his surplus of worldly goods, to the promotion of the great benevolent objects of the day. But alas! he seems never to find any object, to which he can believe it to be the will of God, that he should devote his property. No actually existing evidence will satisfy him. It seems that nothing short of a direct revelation from God, in words to this effect, will work conviction in his mind, "Know

you, A.B., of such a place, at such a time, that thus saith the Lord, it is my supreme will and pleasure, that you devote such a portion of the earthly goods in your possession to the advancement of the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and that you deliver to C.D., the agent of such a society, the specified amount without gainsaying." And that this order of God should be accredited by some direct miracle, or thundered in a voice from heaven, in order to afford the required evidence. I know others, who, while they make large professions of holding themselves and all their possessions at the disposal of God, can always find some excuse for doing little or nothing for the promotion of any benevolent object. Is a church to be built, they can avoid giving any thing by imposing some condition, to which the congregation cannot and ought not to consent. Is the minister's salary to be paid, they can always find some excuse for not believing it to be the will of God, that they should do any thing for his support. Is any thing to be given to the Foreign Mission cause, they can always find some fault with the proceedings of the Board, as a reason for not believing that it is their duty to give. Is any call made for funds to support the holy cause of the abolition of slavery, they don't like the proceedings of the abolition societies. They doubt, whether the funds are properly expended, or there is some imprudence in their measures, which renders it obligatory in them to withhold their funds. Is any thing to be done for the poor, they have always some evasive measure to propose, some other and better way to supply the poor, than the one proposed. If any thing is to be done for Moral Reform, they have some objection to the course pursued by its advocates and friends. And, in short, whatever is to be done, that calls them to self-denial, or to give their possessions up to the promotion of the glory of God, they have always some objection to what is done, or some proposal to have something else done, which, if not complied with, constitutes in their mind a sufficient reason for giving and doing nothing for that object.

Now it should be universally understood, that true submission implies, an earnest desire to be convinced as it respects what is really the will of God--a diligent, honest inquiry after his will, and a perfect readiness to be decided and actuated by any reasonable degree of evidence, and to follow the slightest preponderance of evidence, to whatever self-sacrifice or self-denial it may lead.

- 4. It implies a thankful spirit, for all the past and present providential dealings of God with us. And especially a thankful spirit for those providences that have been and are most deeply afflicting to us. "God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." And in all the afflictions of his children, the tender heart of God is afflicted. People are very apt to suppose themselves to be thankful to God for those providential dealings that seem, at the time, matters of great joy to them; while they think themselves excused from being thankful for dispensations that greatly afflict them. Indeed, they suppose themselves to be very virtuous, if they fall short of going into downright rebellion at such providences. But now let us look at this, Mother; are you a Christian? Yes. And God has given you a little blooming babe. It lies smiling at your breast. You touch its little cheek and chirp as to a little bird; and it looks up and smiles, with such a look of love as to seduce your heart into an attitude of idolatrous attachment. You hang over it when it wakes and when it sleeps. It is in your thoughts at the earliest dawn, at midday, and at evening. All the mother is awake in your soul. And as its little opening powers develop themselves, day after day, your attachment grows stronger and stronger, until it is the object of

your thoughts by day, and your dreams by night. You cannot pray, without the image of your babe before you. You cannot go to the church of God, without having your warmest affections clustering around your little nursling at home. In the solemn worship of the house of God, your thoughts are upon your little idol, and you are weary with the length of the exercises, because they separate you from your little charmer. Now mark; you suppose yourself very thankful, that God has committed to you this little treasure. God loves the little one--He loves its mother. But O! He sees that this sweet gift is too much for your piety. He loves to see you pleased and happy with it. But He cannot consent to see it ruin you. Nor can He willingly see you, through your idolatrous attachment, ruin it. He puts forth his hand and plucks it from your bosom. You open your eyes, and it is gone! And O! God, as it were, turns away his face when He strikes the blow. He feels the pang, as if it had touched the apple of his eye. It has cost Him much. Viewed by itself, it is grievous to his heart thus to afflict you. It has cost Him more self-denial than all the sweet and pleasant things He ever bestowed upon you. He would sooner have borne the pain Himself, than have inflicted it upon you, could it have answered the purpose, which He has proved to a demonstration, by sooner dying for you than to inflict death upon you. O! how you have grieved his parental heart, by forcing Him thus to smite you. Do you feel grieved, when you are obliged to chastise your children? And when you feel obliged to use the rod, to deprive them of their food, or take some prompt measures to subdue their wayward tempers--is it not a matter of grief to you? Are you not more tried and afflicted by it than by all your other pains to do them good. Would you not rather often take the blows yourself, could the same end be answered by it? Indeed, do you not consider it the very climax of parental kindness, self-denial, and love, to march up to the thorough infliction of chastisement when the good of those you love so well requires it at your hand? Now what would you say of a child who, when he had grown to manhood, should look back upon his life and say, I feel grateful to my mother for watching over my helpless infancy. I thank my father for the trouble and expense of my education, and for giving me a farm, and for all the good things of his providence. But, ah! there are many dark spots in the history of my father's dealings with me, to which I find it difficult to be reconciled, and for which I feel that I am far from having any cause to be thankful. At such and such a time he chastised me. This I do not like. I remember that he did it with tears. I recollect how he trembled when he took the rod. I recollect how he lifted up his streaming eyes to heaven. I remember well, that when he had repeated the blows, he turned him away and wept. I saw and knew, that it cost him much--that his heart was bleeding at every pore--that much sooner would he receive the blows himself than have inflicted them on me.

Now do let me ask, for what portion of parental kindness are children under so great obligations of gratitude, as for that needed discipline, which so deeply wrung the parent's heart? O, you will say, of all the trials that I have ever had with my children; of all that I have ever done for them; and of all their obligations to me; I feel that those are the greatest which compel me to the self-denial of inflicting wounds on them.

And now let me ask you, Christian, do you think that you do well, barely to keep away from downright murmuring and rebellion, when you are chastised by your heavenly Father. O, do you remember, how much more deeply you have afflicted Him than He has wounded you? Do you remember, how much it costs Him thus to smite you?--What! can He who loves you so much as to give his life for you, rebuke and distress you, without affliction? Of all the things that He as ever done for you, you are bound to be the most



grateful for his stripes. For when He has been obliged to smite, He has been obliged to touch the apple of his own eye, and reach the deep fountains of compassion in his own heart. O how his heart has pitied you, when He has lifted up the rod. O, how his bowels yearned over you, when it fell upon you; and when you wept, how deeply did He sympathize with your grief. And as soon as you relented how instantly would He smile and wipe away your tears. O! how readily He forgave you. And as soon as the prodigal returned, "He saw you a great way off, and ran, and fell upon your neck, and wept, and kissed you." He took off your rags of shame and guilt. He clothed you in the robes of gladness, and by his love He chased away all your grief. Now can a spirit of true submission imply any thing less than deep gratitude to God for all his providential dealings, and the deepest of all, for those in which He so deeply wounded Himself in wounding you. And of what ought you in infinite measure to repent, if not of those idolatries and sins that lay upon Him such a necessity?

- 5. True submission to God implies, the absence of all carefulness or perplexing anxiety in regard to his future dealings with us. That man certainly cannot be reconciled to God--he cannot be perfectly willing that God should deal with him in future in all respects according to his own will, and at the same time be perplexed with anxieties, and carefulness, and fears, in respect to his future dealings. True submission leaves all such questions entirely in the hands of God, without distress, distrust, anxiety, or fear.

And furthermore, true submission rejoices in the fact, that the wisdom and goodness of God will meet out all his changes for him, in a way that best promotes his own glory and the highest good of the universe.

- 6. True submission also implies, that you have no will of your own except that "the will of God be done on earth as it is done in heaven." It is the constant language and breathings of a submissive soul, "thy will be done." And whenever, in any way, the will of God is known, the submissive soul not merely consents that it should be so, but rejoices in having it so; and would prefer, that this should take place, to any other possible course of events. Because it regards the will of God as supremely wise and good.
- 7. It implies, that you are equally well pleased with whatever God does. The submissive soul does not make a virtue of necessity, and merely consent, or assent to what God does, because to resist will be of no avail. Submission is not the mere absence of murmuring and repining at the providence of God; but is the most joyful and hearty acquiescence and delight in what He does; and that too, not merely in those dispensations of providence that are usually accounted merciful and joyous, but also in those that are usually regarded most afflictive and severe.
- 8. It implies the subjugation of all our appetites and passions to his will and glory. God requires, that "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God." And true submission implies, that this requirement be completely obeyed.
- 9. It implies implicit confidence in God. It is certainly impossible that there should be true submission, when there is not true, real, heart-felt, and practical confidence in God. To submit, and rejoice in whatever He does, certainly implies the most implicit confidence that what He

does is right and best to be done. Implicit faith is therefore always implied in true submission. And this faith must respect the goodness and power of God--that He is wise, and good, and powerful enough, to do in all respects that which is best to be done.

- 10. It implies true repentance for sin. Repentance is that change of mind, that takes the part of God, against all sin--that condemns all sin under every form and in every degree--that fully and heartily justifies God in all the measure of his government. It is not a mere intellectual change of views, but a change of heart, a thorough radical change in the controlling disposition or affection of the soul, in regard to sin and the government of God. Therefore, true submission always implies and includes, in a sinner, true repentance, a thorough reformation of heart and life.
- 11. It implies a cordial acceptance of the salvation of the gospel. And here, when I speak of the salvation of the gospel, I mean, not merely the acceptance of a pardon, on account of the Atonement of Christ; but an acceptance of Christ, as a risen, reigning Savior from sin--not merely an outward, but an inward Savior as a glorious deliverer from all iniquity. This is proffered in the gospel; and nothing is true submission short of a cordial and practical obedience to and acceptance of the gospel of the blessed God.
- 12. It implies actual holiness of heart and life.
- 13. It implies a deep abhorrence of sin and sinners. Said the Psalmist, "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? Am I not grieved with them that rise up against thee. Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies" This hatred is a benevolent hatred. It is a hatred mingled with compassion. Nevertheless, it is a real and deep abhorrence of those that rise up against God.

The subject will be resumed.

## LECTURE XXVI.

January 20, 1841

### **SUBMISSION TO GOD--No. 2**

Text.--James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God."

In continuation of this subject, I will,

### **III. Notice various delusions practiced by many upon themselves.**

- 1. They confound desire with will. And because they desire to be reconciled to God, to give up their sins, to be pious, and such like things, they suppose themselves to be willing; not considering, that willingness and desire are very different things, and that men often desire, and strongly desire, that which upon the whole they are very unwilling should occur. Sinners desire

to be Christians, on a great many accounts; but still they are unwilling to forsake all and follow Christ. Multitudes are deceiving themselves in regard to the very foundation of their moral character, by thus confounding desire with will. And when you ask them, whether they are right, whether they are deeply engaged in the service of God? They reply--"I desire to be; I am willing to do any thing; but I am a poor creature, and cannot do as well as I would." Then fleeing to the 7th of Romans, they suppose themselves exactly to coincide with Paul, in their experience; whom they understand in that chapter to say, that "when I would (am willing to) do good evil is present with me." Whereas in truth it should have been rendered, "when I desire to do good evil is present with me; so that the good which I desire to do I do not, and the evil which I desire to avoid, that I do." The case supposed by the Apostle, in this very chapter, is one in which the soul is in bondage to sin, where conviction is fastened upon the mind, and strong desires for deliverance excited, but where the will is still under the dominion of sin.

- 2. Many deceive themselves, by confounding emotion with the heart or will. Emotions, or what are commonly called feelings, are involuntary states of mind, and are necessarily excited in the sensibility whenever the thoughts are intensely occupied with those considerations which are calculated in their nature to produce such feelings. Now these feelings or emotions are very commonly understood to be identical with the heart. Whereas they are no more the heart than the conscience is the heart. And their existence is no more certain evidence of piety than the convictions and remonstrances of conscience are evidences of piety. Any kind or degree of emotion may exist in the mind, while the heart is entirely selfish. Submission belongs, as I have already said, to the will, or heart. And when the emotions are confounded with the heart there is a ruinous delusion. And this accounts for the fact that so many persons mistake mere excitement for religion. While in all their business transactions they are supremely selfish, they nevertheless can maintain a hope of eternal life. Under strongly exciting preaching, circumstances, or measures, they find themselves strongly excited, and exercised with deep emotion. They call these feelings the feelings of their heart, and thus take it for granted, that their hearts are changed; while all their lives demonstrate, that their hearts are supremely selfish.
- 3. They mistake conviction, remorse, and emotions of sorrow, for that repentance that forsakes sin. Repentance, let it be understood, belongs to the will, and emotions of sorrow for sin, are a consequence of repentance, and do by no means constitute it. Indeed, emotions of sorrow for sin may and often do exist in a high degree, without repentance, or without that change of will that actually rejects or forsakes sin. It should be always understood, that a truly penitent soul cannot live in sin; that is, that it is naturally impossible for a truly penitent soul to live in sin. John says, "he that is born of God cannot sin, because his seed remaineth in him." Now by this seed is not meant some root or kernel, but it represents the voluntary attitude of the will. Will controls the thoughts. It controls the outward actions. Repentance, let it be understood, is a fixed choice, preference, or intention of the mind, and consequently controls the volitions that direct the thoughts and actions. Suppose a man chooses or intends to go to Europe. This choice or intention will beget and be the cause of all those volitions that move the muscles, direct the thoughts, and use all the means necessary for the accomplishment of the intended end. Now if the will or heart is right with God--if a man is in a state of penitence, it is as impossible that he should live in sin, as that he should act against his will. By this I do not mean, that no

regenerate soul can fall under the power of temptation, and at no time commit a sin; for a single volition, or even a series of volitions may, under the pressure of temptation, be put forth by the mind which are inconsistent with the healthy or ruling choice or preference of the mind. But in all such cases, as soon as the pressure of temptation is removed, if the heart is truly regenerate, as soon as the thoughts cease to be diverted from the great object or end which is supremely aimed at by the mind, the whole being will at once come back under the influence of the heart, or supreme choice and intention of the mind. Persons are often convicted, experience the deep agonies of remorse, deeply regret their having sinned, on a great many accounts, and yet, after all, know nothing of that repentance which is unto life, or of that state of submission to God, that puts and keeps the soul strongly on its guard against iniquity.

- 4. Many mistake assent and conviction for faith. Overlooking the fact, that faith belongs to the will, they suppose themselves to believe, while, as a matter of fact, they do not practically confide. Now faith is a practical confidence in God. It is of course a practical confidence, because it is the confidence of the heart. To call that faith which does not produce a corresponding practice is absurd. It is no more an act of faith, than an act of vision is an act of faith. The mere apprehension of truth by the intellect, the mere conviction of the understanding, is just as distinct from faith as an act of vision is distinct from the effect of an act of vision. I see a house on fire; but this is not faith, it is mere perception. I perceive, know, and am convinced, that the house is on fire; but this is not faith. Faith is that act of the mind which is produced by this perception. It is an act of will. In perceiving this truth, the mind goes into action. It puts forth choice, volition, and the whole being into motion, to extinguish the flames, or to rescue the inmates of the house. Just so, when the great truths of religion are perceived by the mind, the mind apprehends and knows these things to be true. But this is an involuntary state of mind. It is not confidence. It is mere apprehension, or knowledge. It may be the occasion of confidence, or faith, or it may not. Faith is that act of the will, that choice, that confidence and trust, which results from the intellectual apprehension of truth; but does not consist in this apprehension. Now to confound conviction with that act of the will or heart which constitutes faith, is a ruinous mistake. I say again, that faith always consists in a practical confidence; because it is an act of will, which of course and of necessity produces corresponding practice.
- 5. Many confound a foolish and wicked Antinomian state of mind with true submission. They have such absurd views of the sovereignty and agency of God, as to think it unnecessary to make any efforts to accomplish their own salvation, or the salvation of others. They suppose themselves to be truly submissive in respect to the salvation of their own children, while they make no more efforts to bring about their conversion or sanctification, than they would to produce a storm of thunder.
- 6. Many mistake a legal and outward reformation for religion.
- 7. Others take it for granted, that the standard notions of the Church, in respect to what constitutes true religion is religion indeed. Especially do they regard the notions of their particular denomination as correct; and looking away from the Bible, they call that religion which accords with the views of their church. And still, more especially, do they think that

religion, described by their minister as being such. Now suppose that a minister had mistaken conviction for conversion, as thousands of professors of religion, and as, no doubt, many ministers really do. In his preaching he would naturally be guided very much by his own experience of what religion is. He would describe that as religion, which he himself had experienced. Whenever any persons in his congregation came into the state of mind in which he is himself, he thinks them converted, and encourages their uniting with the church. Both he and they, thinking themselves converted, remain securely entrenched under their delusions. But upon this model the Church is formed, with these ruinous notions of what true religion is. And out of it young men are sent to prepare for ministry, who also have confounded conviction with conversion. And they form and gather churches, having the same notions of what religion is. Thus this delusion extends itself, until great multitudes of churches and ministers have radically defective views, and consequently a radically defective experience. All such ministers, and such professors of religion, would think it highly censorious and uncharitable, of course, for any one to intimate that they were not truly converted. Now that such is the real fact, at least in some large branches of the Christian Church, cannot be reasonably disputed or doubted; and the longer I live, the more ripe and painful is my conviction, that great numbers of ministers have mistaken conviction, and a mere legal religion, for conversion and the religion of the gospel.

- 8. Many deceive themselves, by ascribing to benevolence or true religion what is in fact the result of other and radically different principals of action. Some ascribe to true benevolence, that which is the result merely of constitutional temperament. Others ascribe that to benevolence, which is the result of the influence of public sentiment, a regard to their own reputation, which should have been done or omitted from pure benevolence alone. And without questioning themselves in respect to what the motive is, under whose influence they are acting, they take it for granted that it is real religion; because outwardly it is in conformity with the principal of benevolence. Or, they ascribe to benevolence and true religion in the heart, those duties that are performed under the influence of hope and fear, or merely legal considerations. In short, they deceive themselves; because they are too careless, or too uncandid to thoroughly discriminate between those things that are the undoubted and conscious results of benevolence, and those things that result from other and opposite principles.
- 9. Others still, deceive themselves, by confounding a boisterous, legal, bitter zeal, with true religion. They forget, that nothing is true religion but love and its fruits. They mistake a vociferous and highly excited state of mind, for that sweet, composed, heavenly, and yet energetic love that constitutes the true religion of the Bible. Such persons are very apt to confound Christian faithfulness with a very harsh and vituperative manner of reproof and rebuking sin. Instead of manifesting a deep disposition to instruct and reclaim self-deceivers and backsliders, they seem to think themselves doing God service in using such language as is only used in inspiration, when addressing those who are the most hardened reprobates and blasphemers.
- 10. Many deceive themselves by saying, that they are willing to do any thing, when in fact they really do nothing. They say they are willing to give up sin; yet, as a matter of fact, they do not give it up. They are willing to forsake all and follow Christ, and yet really do forsake nothing to follow Him. This is a deep delusion. I have more than once said, and it should be for ever

remembered, that as the will is so the conduct is, and that to will is the very thing which God requires. It is a principle in the government of God, that "If there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." This is always true, under the government of God. To will the rejection of sin is the rejection of it. To will obedience to Christ, is obedience to Christ. In other words, to will what Christ requires, is to do what He requires; as the will and the action consequent upon the will are connected by a natural necessity. Many are deceiving themselves, by saying and thinking that they are willing, but are unable to obey God, when the fact is, that they are able enough, but entirely unwilling to do his will.

- 11. Others deceive themselves, by supposing themselves to be pious, when in fact they do not possess even common honesty. They have been guilty of lying, fraud, and multitudes of sins, which have injured their neighbors; and yet they refuse to make confession and restitution. Even when they are in what they call their best frames of mind, they are overreaching and selfish in their dealings, and will perhaps defraud the Post-Office, by sending or receiving double letters, and paying single postage, or take any other selfish and unlawful means to promote their own interest, when they have the prospect of concealment and impunity.

#### **IV. Without true submission salvation is naturally impossible.**

- 1. Because God must and will govern the universe. This He will do, whether you consent to it or not. If He governs without your consent, and contrary to your will, you are of course rendered miserable by it; for his government will continually conflict with your own desires and intentions; and being in direct opposition to your will, it will be a source of continual vexation and annoyance to you.
- 2. He will dispose of you for his own glory, whether you consent or not. Now if this conduct on his part, is not consented to by you--if his disposal of you is not that which you would make of yourself, you are rendered miserable by it of course. You cannot possibly be happy, only as your will perfectly coincides with his in relation to the disposal that is to be made of you. Unless it be the supreme choice and delight of your soul, to be disposed of for his glory, in whatever world it may fix your destiny, and under what circumstances soever your lot may be cast, you are not and cannot be happy under his government. If, on the contrary, you have a will of your own, and would make a different disposal of yourself, property, time, talents, or any thing which you possess, than that which is agreeable to the will of God, you are of course rendered wretched, by having your own feelings crossed, by one whom you cannot resist. You see, then, that it is naturally impossible for you to be saved, any farther than you are truly submissive to God.
- 3. It is naturally impossible that you should have peace, except your will is completely subdued to the will of God. When you become so dead to your own interests as to have no will of your own, except that the will of God should be done, then, and not till then, can your "peace be as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." Peace is opposed to war. War is a state of conflict. Every moral being, whose will is not in entire conformity with the will of God, is striving with his Maker. And it is certainly and naturally impossible that you should have peace, while your will is in a state of conflict with the will of God. He cannot yield to you. He ought

not to do so. His will is supremely good, and should not be yielded up to gratify any being in the universe. Therefore, you must yield. Your will must be entirely subdued. You must come into such a state as to feel supreme complacency and delight in the will of God, not only in all other things, but in his will as it respects yourself, or your salvation is for ever and naturally impossible. God cannot possibly save you in any other way.

- 4. God has no right to save you, unless you are, in all things, submissive to his will. I have already said, that his will is supremely good. For this very reason--He is bound to insist, that every moral being shall be entirely conformed to his will. In just so far, then, as you resist his will, He is bound to treat you as the enemy of the universe.
- 5. He cannot, by any possibility, save you, only as you are entirely conformed to his will. What is salvation? If salvation implies holiness and happiness, then it is self-evident, that He is entirely unable to save you in any other way, than by your being entirely conformed to his will. Suppose He should change his will, and for the sake of gratifying you, and to avoid a conflict between your will and his own, suppose he should submit to you, instead of your submitting to Him. This would do you no good; but would ruin Him and yourself too. The laws of his being would remain for ever the same; and He has no power to change them. He cannot by any possibility be happy any farther than He conforms to the laws of his own being. Supreme and universal benevolence, is in entire conformity with the laws of his being, and therefore naturally and necessarily constitutes his happiness. You are moral agents. If God should so alter your nature as to destroy your moral agency, He would render it impossible for you to be holy, or morally happy. But without a change in your very nature, happiness to you is as naturally impossible, without holiness, as it is to God. The fact is, there is but one possible rule of conduct, conformity to which can make a moral being happy, and that is the law of perfect and universal benevolence. As, therefore, God is love, or benevolence, it is absurd to say, that He can render a moral being happy, only so far as he is holy. For holiness is nothing else than exact conformity of heart and life to the nature and relations of moral beings.

#### **V. With true submission salvation is naturally inevitable.**

- 1. Because, let God do what He will with you, you cannot but be happy, if you are submissive. Let it be remembered, that submission is not a mere negative state of mind. It is by no means a passive state of the will. It is an active, joyful, supreme acquiescence and delight in the will of God. If, therefore, you are in a state of true submission to God, you are supremely pleased and delighted with whatever disposition God shall make of you and are therefore happy of course; whether in heaven or in hell, whether in heathen or in Christian lands, whether poor or rich, whether sick or in health. In whatever circumstances you may be, if you are truly submissive, your "peace is as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." You are supremely blessed, because supremely pleased, gratified, and delighted, with the will and providence of God respecting you. Now what is this but salvation? What other idea can you form of salvation, than what is implied in this state of mind?
- 2. Because, whatever God does, or may do, would be just as you would have it, in all respects. If He should see it to be his duty to send you to hell, and certainly He will never send you there, unless He sees it to be his bounden duty to do so, this would be just as you would have it, and

the very place which you would select for yourself, if left to your own choice in view of all the circumstances of the case. If you believed it to be God's duty to send you there, you would feel it to be your duty to consent to go there. If He should see that the interests of the universe demanded, and could be better promoted, by making you a monument of his justice than in any other way, and that, therefore, this would be the most economical disposition that He could make of you--that by sending you to hell, He could accomplish a greater good than by making any other disposition of you, this is the very election which you yourself would make, if in a state of entire submission to God.

- 3. If then salvation consists in holiness and happiness, true submission will put you in actual possession of salvation in any world. So that God Himself could not prevent your happiness, were you truly submissive to Him, although you were in the depths of hell. For even there you would shout forth his praise, for putting you there, and would be supremely delighted that you were in circumstances, in which you would be of the greatest possible service to the universe. Now, if to do good is your delight--if truly and perfectly benevolent, so that you find it more blessed to give than to receive--if truly or supremely desirous to do the utmost good in your power, put you in any possible circumstances, in any possible world, with the knowledge that you are now in circumstances to do the greatest possible good that can be done by you, and you are supremely blessed, delighted, yea, supremely gratified, to be just in those circumstances. Talk then of making you miserable! Why, it is for ever naturally impossible, while you remain in that state of mind. Happiness is a state of mind. All happiness and all misery belong to the mind, and are the natural and necessary result of conformity or non-conformity to the laws of our being. When in all things we are submissive to God, the whole machinery of our minds works with a most divine sweetness, like an excellent machine, in which there is no friction, no jarring; but all is exquisitely balanced, and a most divine sweetness is shed over all the soul, in its harmonious results. It is like a sweet instrument, so exquisitely tuned and touched with such divine skill, that it breathes the very harmony of heaven. The mind, in a state of entire submission to God, not only harmonizes in all its own movements, but it also entirely harmonizes with the workings of all the machinery in the universe. God's mind, government, plans, and the minds of all holy beings, work together, with the most divine and exquisite harmony, whenever each mind exactly keeps its place; and the law of order is so fully realized, that there is not a point of friction, a note of discord, among all the holy minds in the universe. Why, we read of music in heaven. Do you suppose we shall need instruments there to create our music and feast us with their harmonies? Why, the true idea of music is this very harmony of mind with mind, of which I am speaking. Mind is so constituted, that when all its powers harmonize in action, and when all holy minds act precisely in accordance with their nature, it produces of necessity a universal harmony, a universal sweetness, and a ravishing delight, that needs not instruments and audible sounds to enable the mind to realize that which is intended by the music of heaven. Universal submission to God, is universal harmony, while on the other hand, opposition to the will of God is the friction and discord of the soul. There is an infernal grating, mutiny, and rebellion, of the mind, which naturally and necessarily produces misery. And while a holy soul is like an exquisite instrument that breathes forth nothing but the harmonies of heaven, a sinful soul is like a wretched discordant and infernal instrument, whose keys are touched with a diabolical agency, and groaning forth the very dissonance of hell.

## REMARKS.



1. There is no submission any farther than there is true peace and happiness. If this is true, and certainly it is self-evident, how little submission is there in the world! If all the unhappiness, vexation, and misery of earth, is owing to a want of true submission to God, then there is certainly very little true submission.

2. A submissive soul can know what it is to agonize in prayer, and can know the pain of struggling with temptation; but these are not at all inconsistent with perfect peace in God, and with that happiness that is the natural result of holiness; because this agony in prayer, and this painful struggle with temptation, are only emotions of the mind, and not at all inconsistent with the deep repose of the will in God. But, on the contrary, are evidences that the will is in a state of true submission to God. For, if the will were not in a state of submission to God, this earnest resistance would not be made to temptation. Nor would there be an agonizing struggle in the soul for the salvation of sinners.

3. No man has salvation, therefore, who is not really saved; that is--any farther than his will is subdued to the will of God. In this salvation consists; and it is in vain to talk about salvation, while that in which it consists is overlooked. Many persons entertain the hope of salvation, who self-evidently are not saved, and who, so far as human observation can go, are not likely to be saved. They are continually fretted and annoyed by the providences of God, and are never happy any farther than the providence of God favors their selfish schemes. Every thing else but vexes and displeases them. If the weather is not just as they would have it--if their business operations do not go just so as to favor their own interests--if their health and the health of their families are not in accordance with their selfish views and aims, they are rendered miserable, by what they call adverse providences of God. In short, the fact is, they have a will of their own. They have interests of their own. They have aims and ends, upon the accomplishment of which their happiness is dependent. If God's providence favors them in these respects, they are happy, and think they enjoy religion. But if otherwise, they are miserable, and think themselves to be highly virtuous if they do not go into downright open rebellion against God. They understand submission to mean nothing more than the absence of murmuring, complaining, and accusing God of wrong; and do not understand, that submission implies a delightful acquiescence, a sweet yielding, and delightful choosing, that in all respects the will of God should be done. Now it is manifest, that such persons understand salvation to consist more in a change of place, than in a change of mind--that to be taken to heaven, is to be saved--that to be pardoned is to have eternal life. But certainly this is an infinitely dreadful mistake. Heaven is a state of mind, and may be enjoyed in any world. Hence the saints, or truly submissive souls, are represented as already being in the enjoyment of eternal life. Hell, also, is a state of mind; and it does not require a change of place, to give the wicked a foretaste of the pains of hell. Why, then, talk of salvation, when you are not saved? Why talk of happiness, while you are not holy? Why hope for heaven, while you have the spirit of hell?

4. An unsubdued will is conclusive evidence of an impenitent heart; or, to speak properly, I should say, an unsubdued will is nothing else than an impenitent heart. True submission and penitence, in a sinner, are the same thing. Now there are multitudes of professors of religion, who of course profess to be penitent, while at the same time, they continually manifest a very unsubdued will. They are not submissive either to God or man. They sometimes have emotions of sorrow. They weep and pray, and confess their sins; but to yield up their own will is out of the question. They know not what

submission of will is. They are kept almost in a constant state of fermentation, rasping excitement, and distress, by the providence of God, and yet suppose themselves to be penitent. What oceans of delusion exist among professors of religion upon this subject!

5. This subject shows the immense importance of teaching children, at a very early period, lessons of true and unconditional submission to parental authority. Parents should remember, that they stand to very young children in the place of God. They should lay the hand of parental authority and influence upon the will at a very early period. If their will is not early subdued, it is not likely to be subdued at all. If unconditional and sweet submission to parental authority be not early learned, it will never be learned. And if submission to parental influence be not learned, it is almost certain, that no true submission to God or man will ever be attained. I have witnessed a great many cases of protracted seriousness and distress of mind on religious subjects, when, after all, there was not, and I fear is never like to be any thing of the peace and sweetness of unconditional submission to the will of God. On inquiry, I believe that I have found it to be universally true, that lessons of submission have never been learned by such persons, in early childhood.

6. You can see from this subject, how to account for the dealings of God with many persons. They are almost continually in a course of sore discipline. They are smitten, stripe upon stripe. Now in such cases we may rest assured, that there is some good reason for this, as "God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Under such chastisements, we often hear persons saying, that they cannot understand why they should be thus dealt with. They seem to think there is something very mysterious in God's dealings with them, and are ready to say, "What have I done, that I should be treated thus." Now this state of mind at once reveals the reason, and shows the necessity of such dealings on the part of God. He sees that the will is not subdued; and if you want any other reason for his dealings, than that this course of providence is agreeable to his will, this is itself a sufficient reason why he should cross and disappoint you. It is indispensable to your salvation, that you should be supremely pleased with whatever is agreeable to his will. Now whatever his providence towards you may be, if you are not supremely pleased with it, if you ask for any other reason, why He has dealt so with you, than that so it has seemed good in his sight, this shows, that you are not submissive; that you have not entire confidence in his benevolence and wisdom; and that, therefore, He must give you the reasons of his conduct, before you will fully acquiesce in what He does. This demonstrates the necessity of crossing and re-crossing your path, until you will submit. God can never make you understand all the reasons for his conduct; and unless you have sufficient confidence in Him, and are sufficiently submissive to his will, to be happy in what He does; until you can know and apprehend the reasons for his conduct--you need to be, and must be chastised, until you unconditionally submit, or else be given up and sent to hell.

7. From this subject you may see, how great a blessing it is to be chastised of God, until we do submit, and that we ought most devoutly to beseech God not to spare us until our submission is perfect.

8. You see from this subject, what to think of sinners and backsliders, who live and prosper, without providential chastisements. "Whom I love I rebuke and chasten," says Christ. "If ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." If then you are without chastisement, especially if you do not live and walk with God, do not infer, from your temporal

prosperity, that God approves of your course of life, or that you are the favorite of heaven. But on the contrary, you have reason to fear, that you are given up of God; that God has abandoned you to your own ways, and left you to fill up the measure of your iniquity.

9. You see from this subject, the indispensable necessity of thorough discrimination in respect to what does and what does not constitute true Christian submission. Some persons have seemed to suppose, that true Christian submission consisted in a kind of dreamy, heartless indifference to what they call the mysterious sovereignty of God. They suppose that submission respects fore-ordination and decrees; and seem to have no idea, that true submission consists in voluntary conformity to the revealed will of God. This class of persons are never for making any efforts, to save and sanctify the souls of men. They think this is to be left with the sovereignty of God, and that submission respects rather the unrevealed, than the revealed will of God. Now it is impossible that we should submit to the unrevealed will of God, for the obvious reason, that we do not know what it is, and therefore cannot possibly submit to it. It is, therefore, a delusion, for the man who neglects scrupulously to conform himself to all the revealed will of God, to suppose himself submissive to the sovereignty of God.

10. True submission, and entire consecration, are the same thing. In other words, no man is truly submissive to God, any farther than he is consecrated to God. And it is very obvious, that there can be no true submission, unless for the time being there is universal submission. A man certainly does not submit to God, as God in one thing, who at the same time refuses submission in something else. It is possible that the same mind may be submissive at one time and not at another. But it is certainly impossible that the same mind should both submit to and rebel against God, at the same time. Present submission then is present consecration; continued submission is continued consecration, and permanent submission is permanent consecration, or sanctification to God. Do you know what this is by your own experience?

## **Love Worketh No Ill**

Lecture XXVII

March 3, 1841

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Rom. 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

In discussing this subject I shall show:

*I. What the love that constitutes true religion is not.*

*II. What it is.*

*III. Who is to be regarded as our neighbor.*

*IV. Why love worketh no ill to our neighbor.*

### **I. What the love that constitutes true religion is not.**

- 1. It is not natural affection, or the love of kindred. This needs no comment. The absence of natural affection, as mentioned in the Bible, is evidence of a high degree of depravity; but its exercise is not holiness.
- 2. It is not the love that exists between the sexes. This is only a modification of natural affection.
- 3. It is not the love of complacency. Complacency is an emotion of delight in its object. It is an involuntary state of mind, and exists naturally and often necessarily, when an object calculated to excite emotions of complacency is present to the mind. Being an involuntary state of mind, it often has no moral character at all, and when any degree of moral character is to be ascribed to complacency, it is because the emotions are indirectly under the influence of the will. Emotions are consequent upon thoughts, and arise spontaneously in the mind, when the attention is directed to the deep consideration of any subject. And as the will controls the attention, it indirectly controls the emotions. And emotions of complacency or displacency have moral character only as they are indirectly produced by the action of the will. Complacency may respect a great many different objects:
  - (1.) Personal beauty. We are so constituted, that the presence of beautiful objects naturally excites emotions of complacency or delight in its object. The presence of a beautiful human being naturally and certainly excites emotions of delight, where no feeling of prejudice, envy, or other selfish consideration, begets an opposite state of emotion.
  - (2.) Complacency may respect other physical accomplishments, such as an elegant form, dignified deportment, elegant manners, good breeding, and multitudes of similar things. In such things we naturally take delight, and emotions of complacency naturally and certainly exist in the mind, under the consideration of such objects, unless some selfish or envious reason prevents.
  - (3.) It may respect intellectual endowments, a towering intellect, a lofty imagination, great learning, great eloquence; and innumerable such like things may naturally excite emotions of complacency in their objects.
  - (4.) It may respect benefits received or expected. We naturally feel emotions of complacency in those who befriend us, or grant us great favors; and therefore men may exercise very strong emotions of love to God on account of favors received or expected from Him, without one particle of true religion; but just as naturally as similar emotions

of complacency might be exercised towards any other benefactor, without reference to any other feature of his character than that which is made by the bestowment of the particular favors which excite gratitude and complacency.

- (5.) Complacency may respect and be founded in a similarity of views and intentions. Every man knows it to be true, that he naturally feels complacency in those whose views, aims, and objects of pursuit correspond with his own, unless it be in cases where a similarity of aims produce a clashing of interests, as is sometimes the case with competitors in business. We see men of the same political creed having complacency in each other; and so we often see among professing Christians, members of the same sect, often exercise a strong affection for or complacency in each other, solely on account of the fact of a similarity of views and prejudices. But in this there is not a particle of true piety.
  - (6.) Or, complacency may be a mere reciprocation, a mere loving of those who love us, and because they love us. But there is no piety in this. The Savior says, "If ye love those that love you, what thank have ye? Do not even sinners love those that love them?"
  - (7.) Or it may respect character, whether good or bad. We often see individuals exercising a high degree of complacency in each other, because they are associated in vice. On the other hand, we often see persons exercising a high degree of complacency in each other, on account of their virtues. Men are so constituted, that they never can conscientiously approve of a wicked character; but on the contrary, they must always approve of right character. And all moral beings in the absence of selfish reasons for a contrary feeling will naturally experience emotions of delight in right character, when it is the subject of contemplation. But emotions of love or delight in right character do not constitute piety. Nor are they any certain evidence of piety. There is not a moral agent in the universe who knows what the character of God is, who does not approve it. Nor one who may not, and perhaps does not, when viewing the character of God in the abstract, experience strong emotions of delight in the moral beauty of his character, upon the same principles that he would feel emotions of delight in personal beauty.
  - (8.) It may respect the natural attributes of a being. Thus the wickedest of men may experience the strongest emotions of admiration and delight, in view of the natural attributes of God, as manifested in the works of creation, without a particle of that love to God that constitutes true religion.
- 4. It is not a fondness for a particular person. The love that constitutes the essence of true religion does not respect moral character at all. Nor is it complacency in particular individuals, or a feeling of love of any kind for particular individuals, to the neglect of others. God's holiness consists in universal benevolence to all beings, irrespective of their moral character; and for this reason, it led Him to give his only begotten Son to die for his enemies.
  - 5. Nor is this love an emotion, or mere feeling of any kind.

- 6. It is not a mere experience, or something in which we seem to ourselves to be passive, as we do in the exercise of emotions. A false philosophy has confounded emotions with true religion, under the name of religious affections. And it is astonishing and alarming, to witness the extent to which this mistake and delusion is entertained by mankind. Hence they speak of experiencing religion, and speak of religion as something in which they are passive, something springing up in their own minds involuntarily. They speak of experiencing such and such states of mind, and regard religion as something to be experienced, rather than as something to be done. Indeed the mistake seems to be almost universal, that religion belongs to the emotions, or feelings, rather than to the actings of the will. Hence, complacency in God and in Christians, because they are holy, is generally regarded, not only as evidence of piety, but as constituting the very essence of piety itself. And multitudes of professors of religion are supposing themselves to be highly spiritual, simply because they are in the exercise of lively emotions of gratitude for favors received, of complacency in God, on account of benefits conferred, and of complacency in Christians because they are Christians. Now let me say, that these emotions may be the result of a right state of the will, or of the exercise of that love which constitutes true religion, or they may not. They do not in any case constitute the essence of true religion, and may often exist without it. And what ungodly man, who has ever been in the habit of intense thinking upon religious subjects, cannot testify to the truth of this from his own experience. The fact is, that religion is something to be done, and not merely to be experienced; something in which man is voluntarily active, and not passive. Indeed the foundation of all true religion consists in voluntary action, and not in emotion. By voluntary action I mean, of course, the actings of the voluntary power or the will.

## **II. What the love that constitutes true religion is.**

- 1. I have just said, it always belongs to the will; that is, it consists in acts of the will.
- 2. It is a state of the will, in opposition to a single or a series of volitions. There is an important distinction to be here noticed, between choice and volition. Choice is the mind's election or selection of an end. Volition consists in those efforts or actions of the will which are put forth to accomplish the end chosen. A man chooses to be a merchant. In obedience to this choice his will puts forth all those volitions that put his body and mind in motion, and that are necessary to accomplish the object chosen. Choice, then, is a state of mind in opposition to those volitions that are exercised for obtaining the end chosen.
- 3. The love, then, that constitutes true religion, is a fixed, permanent choice, or state of the will. It should be understood, that it is a state, abiding choice, or preference; and from the very laws of the mind has a controlling influence. If you choose to go to the city of New-York, this choice will naturally and certainly beget those volitions and states of mind, and actions of the body that will accomplish this end, if it is within your power.
- 4. The love that constitutes true religion is the choice of a supreme end or object of pursuit, or a selection of the great and ultimate end of existence. It is a supreme, permanent, controlling preference or choice of the mind.
- 5. It is benevolence or good-willing; the exact opposite of selfishness. Selfishness is the

supreme preference or choice of self-gratification, as the grand end of life. It is a choosing or willing our own gratification. This is the foundation of all sin, and the carryings out of this consist in those volitions, states of mind, emotions, and bodily actions that make up the history of wicked men. The love mentioned in the text, and that constitutes true religion, is that state of mind demanded by the law of God. Hence, it is said in the text, that "love is the fulfilling of the law." It is the mind's supreme election or choice, of the universal good of being, as the supreme end of existence. And it respects the good of all beings capable of doing or enjoying good. This supremely respects the being of God, as He is capable of doing and enjoying infinitely more good than all other beings. It therefore prefers his good, happiness, and glory, to all other things in the universe. Remember, it is benevolence in God and not complacency in God, that constitutes the foundation of all true religion. Complacency in God is virtue, when it is produced by a virtuous state of the will, but not otherwise. Complacency in the character of God, is often mentioned in the Bible as constituting virtue; but it should always be remembered, that emotions of complacency in God and other holy beings, when they are virtuous at all, instead of constituting the foundation and essence of virtue, are virtue only in its lowest form. I repeat it, the foundation of all virtue is benevolence to God and to the universe. It is good willing and doing, in opposition to mere good feeling. I wish to get this idea distinctly before your minds, because there are so many mistakes upon this subject.

- 6. But here let me say, that the love which constitutes true religion is disinterested love. And here again let me beg you not to misunderstand me. For oftentimes, when we speak of disinterested love, it is manifest that we are understood to mean disinterested good emotions, rather than disinterested good willing. When it is said that disinterested love consists in loving God for what He really is, it often seems to be meant, that we are to exercise complacency in God, on account of his character, and this complacency is represented as disinterested love; but this is a grand mistake. To love God for what He is, and with that love which constitutes true religion, is to love Him with the love of benevolence, to will his good, his glory, and happiness. Now complacency in his character will naturally and certainly exist where there is true benevolence toward Him, and as I have already said, it may exist where there is no benevolence at all, when his character is viewed as it may be, as a mere abstraction. But let it be for ever remembered, that true religion consists in benevolence to God and to men, and to all beings capable of loving or receiving good. This benevolence does not respect personal character, but regards the good of every moral and every sentient being, in proportion to its relative value as that is apprehended by the mind, whether sinful or holy. It longs for the salvation of the wicked as much as for the salvation of the righteous. This is manifestly the temper and spirit of God. This is the spirit of Christ, and this is the essence and substance of true godliness wherever it exists. It would not wantonly injure a fly nor tread upon a worm. It regards happiness as a real good. It longs for the diffusion of universal holiness among all moral agents, and of universal enjoyment among all sentient beings. God delights Himself in the happiness of the little chirping birds, and bounding lambs, and leaping fishes, and all the multitudes of animal existences with which the universe is teeming. So every benevolent mind has chosen the promotion of universal good as the supreme end of life. Consequently its volitions, thoughts, and actions are in deep harmony and sympathy with God, and directed to the same end to which He directs his efforts.

### **III. Who is to be regarded as our neighbor.**

- 1. We are to regard all moral beings as our neighbors, in whatever country or in whatever world they may exist. We are to regard their interests and happiness according to their relative value. This cannot reasonably, and probably will not be doubted.
- 2. All sentient beings are to be regarded as our neighbors, all connected with us in the great chain of being. And the good of mere animals is to be regarded and treated by us according to its relative value. The beasts of the field--the fowls of the air--the fishes of the sea--every thing that has life and breath, all are to be regarded as our neighbors.
- 3. Especially those moral beings most immediately within our reach, and who are the most naturally and certainly affected by our influence--those whose geographical proximity to us brings them within our immediate neighborhood, in a most emphatic sense. Our families, and those whose habitations are most contiguous to ours, who live in the same town, county, state, or nation--these are to be regarded as especially our neighbors, not to the neglect or annihilation of our relation to the human family and to the universe. But to those more within our reach, we are under special obligations, whether they be men or mere animals. Every sentient being within our reach, is to be regarded as emphatically our neighbor.

#### **IV. Why this love worketh no ill.**

- 1. Because, as it belongs to the will and therefore naturally controls the actions of both body and mind, it will work no ill to its neighbor. As it directs the thoughts, it will not think evil of a neighbor. As it consists in choice, and therefore directs the volitions, it will not suffer volitions that shall work ill to its neighbor. As through the volitions it controls the outward actions, it cannot work ill to its neighbor.
- 2. Because it has no tendency to work ill to our neighbor--
  - (1.) It respects a neighbor's rights, and aims at securing instead of trampling upon them.
  - (2.) It respects a neighbor's piety, and endeavors by all possible means to make him holy as a means of making him happy. It regards his holiness and happiness as a great good, and is not reckless of the influence it exerts, either to promote or destroy a neighbor's piety.
  - (3.) It regards the interests and well-being of a neighbor in all respects.
  - (4.) Especially does it respect the rights, piety, and happiness of those with whom we are most nearly in contact, and who for this reason are more immediately under our influence.
  - (5.) Benevolence omits no known duty, whereby our neighbor's interest may suffer, and therefore does not by omission work ill to its neighbor.
  - (6.) It does not omit any duty, whereby he is stumbled, and led through imitation of our example or in other ways to fall into sin.



- (7.) As it consists in good-willing, or in choosing the universal good of being as the supreme end of life, it will of course beget those volitions and actions, that will promote the good of all around us, and especially of those who are near, and most immediately affected by our conduct.

In the 13th chapter of first Corinthians, the Apostle describes this love as the foundation and sum of all virtue; and after asserting in the strongest language, that no faith or work is of any value without it, he mentions several of its prominent characteristics, with the manifest design of distinguishing that which constitutes true religion from every thing else.

- Our translation calls it charity. The original word is the same as that which is rendered love in this text. The same word is uniformly used in the original for that state of mind that constitutes true religion, or the love required by the law of God. This love, He says, is "patient and long suffering." And who does not know, that we are naturally very patient and long suffering towards those whose happiness is very dear to us, and toward whom we feel truly benevolent. Mere complacency is fitful and evanescent, and depends so much upon the particular exhibition made to our mind at the time, as to be transitory from its very nature. See the complacency that parents have in their children. When they are sweet, and smiling, and lovely, the parent is exceedingly delighted with them. But if they become ill-natured, and hateful, here another exhibition is made to the mind, which, instead of exciting complacency, begets impatience and fretfulness. Just so a mere complacency in God will often be exceedingly fitful and of short duration, as the ever varying course of his providence exhibits Him to our minds as robed in smiles or clothed with frowns. But benevolence is not subject to these changes; because it has not its foundation in the moral character, in the naturally pleasing or displeasing manifestations that are made to the mind; but it is good-willing. It is a patient, persevering, supreme disposition to promote the good of its object.
- A second characteristic named by the Apostle is kindness. "Charity suffereth long and is kind." This is of course a characteristic of benevolence, or good-will.
- A third characteristic is, that it "envieth not." Envy is an emotion of unhappiness in view of the prosperity of others. Now as the love that constitutes true religion consists in benevolence, it is impossible that it should consist with envy. Benevolence cannot be disturbed and made unhappy by the prosperity of its object. Envy is, therefore, the very opposite of true religion, and is the offspring of hell. An envious man is "of his father the devil, and the lusts of his father he will do."
- A fourth characteristic of this love is, that it "vaunteth not itself," or, as rendered in the margin, it is not rash. It is mild and amiable, and not rough and head-strong.
- A fifth characteristic of this love is, that it "is not puffed up." It is not swelling, and pompous, and showy, and Pharisaical, ostentatious, and proud; but is exactly the

reverse of all this.

- A sixth characteristic is, that it "doth not behave itself unseemly." True politeness consists in the practice of benevolence. And when wicked men affect to be truly polite, they affect to be truly benevolent. They are, to be sure, hypocritical in this; but still, it remains a truth, that true politeness manifests itself in a disposition to make every body happy. So that one of the characteristics of true religion is true politeness. It "doth not behave itself unseemly." There is a natural urbanity and courteousness that is always a characteristic of true benevolence. True religion does not need the polish of a dancing school, or to ape the manners of nobility, or the most refined classes of society, in order to exhibit genuine politeness. Who doubts that Jesus Christ was truly polite? His benevolence led Him to seek the comfort and happiness of all around Him. He sought both their temporal and their spiritual good. When at a feast, he chose not the chief seat for Himself; but gave others the preference. His benevolence exhibited itself in making as little trouble wherever He went as possible; and consequently when in the house of Martha and Mary, He manifested no disposition to have the sisters give up their time to preparing good dishes for his entertainment. But He commended Mary for listening to his instructions, and reproved Martha for giving herself up to carefulness for his entertainment. Take any person you please, and let him be filled with the love of God, and he will naturally and certainly exhibit a lovely exterior instead of that which is unseemly. If riding in a stage coach, if in a steam boat, a railroad car, at a public house, at home, or abroad, in public, or in the family circle, he will exhibit a disposition to accommodate, to prevent all unhappiness, and all sin, and to make every body comfortable, and holy, and happy. He will not be boorish and unmannerly, rough, outrageous, and unseemly; but will exhibit that wisdom that cometh down from heaven, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."
- A seventh characteristic is, that it "seeketh not her own." Its supreme object is the promotion of the universal good and happiness of all. Of course it will not be selfish, but will manifest itself in the most assiduous endeavors, to make all around as comfortable, and as happy, and as holy, as possible.
- An eighth characteristic is, it "is not easily provoked." Of course benevolence will not easily quarrel with its object. It is not quickly impatient, and ready to scold, but is extremely calm and forbearing.
- A ninth characteristic is, that it "thinketh no evil." It not only does not meditate any evil, but does not surmise or suspect evil where all appearances are right. A selfish mind is always suspecting hypocrisy in others, because it is conscious of hypocrisy in itself. A hypocrite, a liar, a knave, or dishonest man, is apt of course to suspect others, because he naturally judges others by himself. But an honest, upright, benevolent mind, thinketh no evil, unless there is some appearance of evil.

- A tenth characteristic is, that it "speaketh no evil." This is not especially mentioned by the Apostle in this connection, but it is a doctrine abundantly taught in the Bible. And if it were not, the very nature of true benevolence, renders it certain, that it speaketh no evil. Speaking evil, is speaking either truth or falsehood, which is prejudicial to the character of any one, with a selfish intention, and when the circumstances of the case do not demand such speaking as a dictate of benevolence. Now benevolence is the choice of the universal good of being. It is therefore impossible that benevolence should be guilty of evil speaking. It is tender of every man's reputation as of the apple of its own eye, and would as soon pluck out its own eyes, as to inflict a needless wound upon the character of any one.
- Another characteristic is, that it "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." As all iniquity is injurious to the universe, benevolence must deplore it of course, and cannot rejoice in it. But as truth is the instrument of universal good, benevolence must of course rejoice in the truth.
- The Apostle goes on to say it, "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." I cannot enlarge upon these particulars. He concludes by saying, charity or love "never faileth;" that is, it abideth. From its very nature, it is a state of mind, and is not fitful and evanescent like emotions. The emotions of the mind are naturally like an effervescence, thrown into an excitement, and then naturally and quickly subside. On the contrary, "charity never faileth." It is the supreme, deliberate choice of the mind, or abiding, permanent state of the will; instead of that feverish excitement which people talk of experiencing, and which they falsely denominate true religion.

## REMARKS.

1. From this subject we learn the delusion of an Antinomian religion. Vast multitudes of professors of religion suppose religion to consist in frames and feelings, instead of good-willing. They can relate what they call a good experience. They can talk of their views, and raptures, and peace of mind; and in these things they manifestly suppose true religion to consist. Now, I have already said, and wish here to repeat it, that as these frames consist in emotions, and are only indirectly under the power of the will, they are the very lowest forms of virtue, and doubtless may exist, where there is no true religion at all. They may arise solely out of a mistaken view of God's character and relations, and of our own character and relations. The Universalist doubtless exercises the love of complacency toward the God which he worships. The Antinomian feels complacency in God, as he understands his character. Thus every form of enthusiasm, fanaticism, and delusion, may be united with complacency in an imaginary God. Indeed it is very easy to see, that almost any possible or conceivable state of the emotions, or mere feelings, may be produced, by mistaken views of things. Now as the mere feelings or emotions of the mind depend upon the views and opinions which are entertained by the mind, very little dependence can be placed upon them, even as evidences of true piety. Much less should it be supposed, that true piety consists in them. Many persons are carried away with dreams, and entertain the strangest and most absurd opinions on religious subjects; but their emotions will be found to correspond with their views, thoughts and opinions. And these emotions will sometimes be

exceedingly deep and overpowering, and it matters not at all whether these opinions are true or false. Persons will feel just as deeply in a dream, in view of the most absurd and ridiculous things that a dreaming mind can imagine, as if those things were actual realities. Now it would be strange indeed if the reality and depth of these emotions should be depended upon as evidence of the reality of their objects. The solemn fact is, that there is a great, very common, but ruinous mistake upon this subject, in making religion to consist in emotions, and what are very commonly termed affections, instead of consisting, as it really does, in the state and actions of the will.

It appears to me, that Pres. Edwards has committed a sad mistake upon this subject, in confounding the sensibility with the will, and has laid a foundation for a vast amount of delusion.

And here let me be understood. Emotions, or frames and feelings, are the certain and necessary results of a right state of the will, or of the benevolence or good-willing that constitutes true religion. If the will is right, it will direct the attention of the mind to the consideration of those subjects that will naturally and necessarily beget lively and deep emotions of gratitude, complacency, godly sorrow, and all those states of mind of which Christians speak, and which they are so apt to conceive as constituting true religion. But these constitute the happiness, rather than the virtue of the mind. They are rather the reward of holiness than holiness itself. To be sure, they are virtuous so far as they are indirectly under the influence of the will. But they are only virtuous on that account, and are so, therefore, in no other sense than thoughts, and the decisions of conscience may be virtuous. Thought is the spontaneous & necessary acting of mind when the will directs the attention to an object of thought. The decisions of conscience are the necessary decisions of reason when the attention of the mind is directed by the will, to a consideration of those subjects that come under the jurisdiction of conscience. Both the thoughts and the decisions of conscience are necessary, when the attention of the mind is thus employed by the will. These actions of the mind are, therefore, moral actions, in the same sense that the outward or bodily actions are moral actions. The muscles move at the bidding of the will. And whenever any state of mind, or motion of the body, is under the control of the will, there is a sense in which these actions have moral character. But separate them from the actions of the will, and they have no moral character at all. Now if the will be right, there is a sense in which the thoughts, and decisions of conscience, and outward actions may be virtuous; and if the will be wrong, there is a sense in which they are all vicious.

It should, however, be borne continually in mind, that the praise or blame-worthiness lies in the voluntary actions of the mind, or in the decisions of the will; and, properly speaking, in the decisions of the will alone.

2. From this subject it is easy to see, that where there is true religion, there must of necessity be a corresponding life. The emotions do not control the actions of body or mind. Consequently, if religion consisted in emotion, it might exist in the mind in its reality and strength, without being evinced in the outward conduct. For we know, that men often exercise the deepest feelings and emotions on subjects, while they refuse or neglect to act in conformity with their feelings. But the same cannot be said of the actions of the will. Men always act outwardly in conformity with their volitions. Their outward actions are connected with the actings of their will, by a natural necessity. Good-willing, therefore, or true religion, always manifests itself in a holy life. Inaction and supineness in religion are absurd and impossible, where true religion exists. Benevolence, or good-willing, must produce action and good

action, by a natural necessity. It is therefore absurd and ridiculous to say, that a man has true religion, and yet is not employed in doing good, where he is able to act at all. Remember, I beseech you, that religion is benevolence or good-willing, and not mere feeling or emotion; and because it is good-willing, it necessarily produces good acting. So that the very essence of religion is activity, exertion, or effort of heart and life, to promote universal good. A religion of supineness is therefore not the religion of Christ. Antinomian inaction is as opposite to true religion as light is to darkness. And a person can no more be truly religious, and give himself up to inaction, and ecstasy, and peace, and joy, than he can do any thing else that involves a contradiction. Religion consists in the state or actings of the heart, or will; and is, therefore, in its very nature, essential activity. I mean as I say. Religion is activity itself. It is the mind, willing the good of universal being.

3. You see also the great delusion of making religion to consist in a complacent love of God and of Christians. I have already said, that complacency is an emotion, and where the will or heart is right, will always be exercised towards God. But it is rather the effect, than the essence of true religion. It appears to me, that many mistake in supposing, that the love of the brethren, which is so largely insisted on in the Bible, is complacency rather than benevolence. But a little consideration will show, that the love of the brethren and Christians, insisted upon by Christ and his Apostles, is benevolence, and not complacency. It is spoken of as the same kind of love with which Christ loved us. Hence, it is said, that "as Christ laid down his life for us, we should be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren." But the love of God and of Christ for the world was benevolence, and not complacency. It was a love exercised to enemies, and not to those that were holy, and consequently must have been benevolence.

4. We see the mistake of those who excuse themselves for the want of love to the brethren, because they say they do not see in them the image of Christ. The love that we exercise to the image of Christ is complacency. And this excuse shows that those who make it suppose the love required of them to be complacency and not benevolence; and that, consequently, where there is no holiness manifest, there is no obligation to exercise love. Now this is a ruinous mistake. For the love which we are required to exercise to the brethren is good-will, or benevolence, and therefore does not respect their moral character. So that a true Christian exercises deep and permanent affection for the brethren, whatever may be their spiritual state. There are many persons who seem to give themselves up to the most censorious and denunciatory speaking of heartless professors of religion, and seem to think, that this is all well enough, because they are all backsliders or hypocrites. Now, I would humbly ask, is this benevolence? Is this love?

To this benevolence the love of complacency is added, where there is a foundation for it, or a manifestation of holy character. And complacency will render it still more certain, that he who exercises it will avoid all evil speaking. But benevolence itself, where there is no manifestation of holy character, as I have already shown, will naturally avoid speaking evil, or "working ill to our neighbor."

5. You see from this subject, the delusion of those who profess to be religious and yet transact business upon selfish principles. Selfishness and benevolence are exact and eternal opposites. Said a professional man to me, not long since, "I have been surprised, that the religion of those who have been long religious does not do more to overcome their selfishness." This is just the same thing as to

express surprise, that those who have long professed to be religious have no religion. The fact is, that the very beginning of religion, or the new birth itself, is the overthrow of selfishness, as the reigning principle of the mind. It is the establishment in the mind, as a permanent state of the will, of the antagonist principle of benevolence. Hence, it is said, that "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," and that "he who is born of God cannot sin, for his seed remaineth in him, so that he cannot sin, because he is born of God." By this I do not understand the Apostle to mean, that a soul that is born of God cannot be seduced into occasional sins, by the power of temptation; but that he cannot live in sin. He cannot transact his daily business upon selfish principles, which are the essence of all sin. It is therefore absurd and impossible, that a benevolent or truly religious mind should transact business upon selfish principles.

6. Love, or benevolence, and its necessary fruits, is the whole of religion. I say necessary fruits, because the actions of the mind and body are connected with the actions of the will, by a natural necessity; so that the fruits of holiness are the necessary products of a right state of the heart, or will.

7. Where there are no fruits there is no true religion. It is in vain for unfruitful souls, Antinomians, and persons who sit down in inaction, to pretend to be pious. They talk in vain of their views, their experience, and their raptures. Unless the fruits of benevolence, or good-willing, are upon them; unless, like Christ, they go about doing good, when they are able to go about at all, it is a delusion and nonsense for them to suppose, that they are truly religious.

8. We see from this subject the delusion of those individuals, and churches, and ecclesiastical bodies, who seem to be given up in a great measure to censoriousness and vituperation, engaged it would seem, in little else than watching for the haltings and the errors of their brethren, and who seem to be abandoned to a spirit of fretfulness rather than of love or good willing. In this remark, I do not of course mean to accuse the whole Church of being in this state, but speak of those who really are in this state.

9. You see the delusion of those editors of news papers, whose columns savor of gabble rather than of the sweet benevolence of God. Look into their pages: is that the "love that worketh no ill to his neighbor"? Why, instead of working no ill to his neighbor, it would work the ruin of the world if people had any confidence in what they read in such periodicals. No thanks to some of the editors of the present day, if their papers do not work unlimited mischief. It will only be because the readers have ceased to confide in them. I do not of course design this remark to be of universal application, but that there are lamentable cases to attest the truth of this remark, will be acknowledged with sorrow by those who truly love the Lord.

10. We see the delusion of those whose religion consists in desiring the happiness of those who are at a distance, while it neglects the happiness of those in its immediate neighborhood. Multitudes of individuals will go to the Monthly Concert and pray for the heathen, will give money to send the Gospel or the Bible to the heathen, but their prayers seem always to overlook those right around them, and who are more immediately and necessarily affected by their conduct. Their own domestics or clerks, or laborers, are perhaps daily rendered unhappy by their malevolence and peevishness. They are left in a great measure unprayed for, unwarned, unblest by them. They seem to be engaged in anything but promoting the happiness of those within their reach, and yet suppose themselves to be

truly religious. But herein is a great delusion. It is the religion of the imagination and desires. It is like the piety of a man who contemplates going on a foreign mission--feels deeply as he says for the heathen, but never bestirs himself to save the souls of men at home. He can go through with his education as lazily as a drone. He can let his own class-mates and perhaps his own room-mate go down to hell unblessed and unwarned. He can let his own neighborhood and his own kindred sink down to death and hell around him, and yet imagine himself to feel truly benevolent and to long for the salvation of the heathen; never promote piety and revivals of religion at home, and yet work himself into the belief that he shall do it abroad. But again I say this is the religion of the imagination, and a deep and ruinous delusion. Let such a man go on to heathen ground and be surrounded with the naked and cold realities of heathenism, and he will find at last his sad mistake; and were it not for his pride of character and fear of the loss of reputation, he would soon find his way back to Christian lands, and the repose and indolence of a contemplative life. How many there are who are in the constant neglect of the happiness of all in their immediate neighborhood, whose prayers and efforts seem always to overleap the heads of all within their reach, and light down upon distant and unknown lands. Now true benevolence embraces all mankind, but it always concerns itself for the time being, to secure the well-being of those most immediately within its reach. Those that compose the domestic circle are the objects upon which it necessarily and primarily exerts itself. Through these it flows abroad to all that are near, especially, and ceases not till it reaches those that are afar off. In this sense it is true that "charity begins at home," but not in the sense in which this is generally understood. This saying is generally supposed to mean that charity regards self-interest first and most, but the very fact that the term charity is used which is synonymous with benevolence, shows that the true meaning of this saying is, that benevolence begins by seeking the happiness of those in its immediate neighborhood, and continues to extend itself until it reaches those that are afar off.

11. The kind of religion or rather of irreligion of which I have just been speaking would be of no benefit if the world were full of it. Suppose that all mankind had this kind of religion, each one desiring and praying for the happiness of those beyond his reach, but neglecting and trampling upon the happiness of all within his reach. Who then would be happy? Every one employed in making those immediately in contact with him unhappy, and only seeking the happiness of those at a distance, who are in their turn rendering themselves and those immediately around them unhappy while they are desiring and praying for the happiness of others at a distance. Such religion as this would leave the world in wretchedness if every man on earth possessed it.

12. You can see how real religion makes its possessor happy. There is a sweetness and a divine relish in the exercise of benevolence itself, and in addition to this the emotions of the mind will, ordinarily, be in accordance with the state of the will or heart. And thus true religion necessarily results in the happiness of its possessor.

13. You see what a truly religious family, neighborhood or universe would be. Every one employed in making those around him happy to the full extent of his power. A most divine religion this! Take but a single family, where benevolence is the law of every inmate. See the husband and wife, brothers and sisters, and all the inmates of the family, how careful they are not to injure each other's piety, or unnecessarily to wound each other's feelings--how kindly they watch over each other for good--how watchful they are to each other's interests and happiness--how pleased each one is to deny himself to promote the general good. The law of kindness dwells ever on their tongues. Such a family is a little

picture of heaven. Wherever such a family is found, it is an oasis, or a little green spot in the midst of a vast wilderness of moral death.

14. You see the utter unreasonableness of infidelity. Infidels affect to disbelieve the necessity of a change of heart. But what do they mean? do they not know by their own observation that mankind are by nature supremely selfish? And can they be happy without a radical change of heart? A world of selfish beings make up heaven! The idea is absurd and ridiculous. It is self-evident that without that change of heart which consists in a radical change of character from selfishness to benevolence, mankind can never be saved.

15. You see from this subject how to detect false hopes. False professors are either inactive in religion, or manifest a legal spirit in opposition to the spirit of love. There are two extremes that should always be well guarded in religion. The one is antinomianism, which satisfies itself with frames and feelings while it makes little or no exertion for the salvation of the world. The other is a legal zeal that bustles about often harshly and furiously and professes to be working for God, when there is a manifest dash of bitterness and misanthropy in the countenance and manner and life. This is not the love that worketh no ill to his neighbor. It is not the benevolence and spirit of Christ; and all such religion is spurious however zealous, however active, and however apparently useful it may be.

16. Spurious conversions often throw the mind into a state of fermentation and deep feeling which of course soon subsides. But true conversion consists in a change of choice, and is of course an abiding state of mind. Where there are revivals of religion the chaff may be easily discovered from the wheat when the effervescence of excited emotion has passed by. You can then see whether the will is under the control of truth. While the emotions are strong they may induce a series of volitions which would lead for the time being to the conclusion that the will or heart is really changed, but as soon as these emotions subside, if the heart is not changed, the selfish preference will again resume its control; and just in proportion as the excitement ceases will it become apparent in the man's life, and spirit, and temper, and especially in his business transactions, that his selfish heart or preference is not changed, and that he is still an unregenerate man. The fact that the emotions very often induce volition, and many times a series of volitions inconsistent with the governing preference of the will or heart, renders it impossible for us, in the midst of the excitement of a revival, to distinguish clearly between true and false conversions; but as the excitement subsides, if we are willing to be guided by the word of God, we can clearly distinguish between those that are born again, and those that are not. And we are bound so to distinguish, and to deal faithfully, and promptly, and energetically with those who are seen still to remain in selfishness.

17. You see the vast importance of distinguishing that which constitutes true religion, and all those frames and feelings upon which so much stress is laid in many portions of the Church, who are yet inactive in the cause of Christ and who suppose themselves holy simply because they know not what holiness is. They do not understand that their frames are the result of their views and opinions, and whether their opinions are right or wrong, cannot be known by their frames or emotions, but by the actings of their will. They may have love in the form of emotion--they may have peace, and joy, and even ecstasy in the form of emotions, without one particle of true religion. And if they are not really in a state of efficient good-willing--if they are not engaged in doing good, in promoting individual and general happiness to the extent of their power, it is absolutely certain that they are not truly religious.



O that this were understood! O that it were known that religion is benevolence--the love that is willing to lay down the life for its neighbor! How much that is called religion is working continual ill to its neighbor! But blessed be God, true religion worketh no ill to its neighbor. Give me then religious neighbors, and I am content. Give me irreligious neighbors, and I will try to do them good. Let him hear that hath an ear to hear. Amen.

## **Self Denial**

Lecture XXVIII

March 17, 1841

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Texts.--Luke 9:23: "He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

In this discussion I shall show:

- I. What self-denial is not.*
- II. What it is.*
- III. What is implied in it.*
- IV. What is not taking up the cross.*
- V. What is taking it up.*
- VI. What is implied in it.*
- VII. What following after Christ is not.*
- VIII. What it is.*
- IX. What is implied in it.*
- X. That these are indispensable conditions of salvation.*

### **I. What self-denial is not.**

- 1. It is not the giving up of one form of selfishness for the sake of another form. In other words, it is not the triumph of one form of selfishness over another form of the same principle, &c.
  - (1.) Breaking off from any form of sin, for fear of the consequences of indulgence to self, is not self-denial; for this, after all, is only consulting self-interest.
  - (2.) Breaking off from any form of sin, from the expectation of reward, is not self-denial, but only consulting self-interest.
  - (3.) Forsaking any form of indulgence for prudential reasons, such as regard to the health, wealth, reputation, &c. This is not self-denial, but only a regard to self-interest. It is only one form of selfishness triumphing over another.
  - (4.) Self-denial does not consist in either doing or omitting any thing whatever from selfish motives. For it is impossible to deny self for selfish reasons. It is absurd to talk of denying self to promote self-interest; for this is not self-denial, but is only denying self in one respect, for the sake of gratifying self in another respect. Self is after all at the bottom. And self-interest is the grand reason of every change of this kind.
  - (5.) Self-denial, therefore, does not consist in abandoning the use of whatever is injurious to us, because it is so.
  - (6.) Nor does self-denial consist in giving to others that for which we have no use, or the use of which could be of no service to us. There is no denying self in this.
  - (7.) Nor does self-denial consist in giving or doing that which subjects us to no privation, inconvenience, or trouble. What self-denial is there in this?
  - (8.) Nor does it consist in that which subjects us to any degree of expense, inconvenience, trouble, reproach, or even death itself, if it be for any selfish reason; for in this case it is only consulting, upon the whole, self-interest. It is self-indulgence, instead of self-denial.

## **II. What self-denial is.**

- 1. It is the denying of self, not for the sake of a greater good to self, but for the sake of doing good to others. This is really denying self.
- 2. Self-denial is a real sacrifice of self-interest, from disinterested motives; that is, from a singleness of eye, to glorify God, and do good to others.

## **III. What is implied in self-denial.**

- 1. True holiness of heart, or supreme disinterested love to God. If God's glory is so preferred to our own happiness or convenience, that we deny ourselves for the sake of glorifying Him, it proves that our love to Him is supreme.

- 2. Self-denial implies disinterested love to men. If we deny ourselves for the sake of promoting their happiness, whenever their happiness is a greater good than our own, it shows that we love them according to the requirement of the law of God.
- 3. It implies the giving up of that which might be a real good to us. It is no proper denial of self, unless we might be benefited by the thing which is given up. If, as I have before said, the use of it would be an injury to us, and it be abandoned for that reason, this is rather self-indulgence than self-denial.
- 4. Self-denial implies the joyful giving up of what we need, or what might contribute to our comfort, for the purpose of doing a greater good to others. For example--here is a man who has been to the baker's, and purchased a loaf of bread for his supper. He has been laboring hard, and really needs the bread. But in passing a miserable habitation of poverty, a little, pale, emaciated child stands at the door, and, stretching out its little beggar hands, asks for bread. He is induced to enter this abode of wretchedness, and finds a widowed mother, sick and famishing, surrounded with her starving babes. He is hungry himself; but they are starving. He has no more money. If he gives his bread, he must retire without his supper. If he gives all that he has, it will afford but a scanty pittance to this starving family; but he gives it instantly. He gives it joyfully, and absolutely retires to bed without his supper, with tears of joy and gratitude, that by denying himself he has been able to keep a fatherless family from absolute starvation. This is self-denial. It was self-denial in God to send his Son to die for sinners, and self-denial in Christ to undertake and accomplish the great work of man's salvation.
- 5. Here it should be remembered, that if what we possess will be less beneficial to others than to ourselves, or if depriving ourselves of any thing will promote the good of others less than it will detract from our own, enlightened benevolence would forbid the sacrifice. For example--it would not be enlightened benevolence for a man to give up his life for a mere brute. For a man's life and happiness are worth more than the life and happiness of a beast. Nor would it be virtuous in a man to starve himself for the sake of feeding his dog.
- 6. Every sacrifice of lawful enjoyment, of ease, convenience, health, time, talents, property, reputation, and whatever might be lawfully enjoyed, from a disinterested desire to promote the glory of God and the greater good of the universe, is self-denial.
- 7. In short, self-denial implies, the death of selfishness. That is--self-denial and selfishness cannot exist in the mind at the same time. They are exact opposite states of mind.

#### **IV. What is not taking up the cross.**

- 1. It does not consist in the performance of the social and public duties of religion.
- 2. Nor in crossing the bodily appetites for the good of the soul.
- 3. Nor in crossing our pride for the good of our soul.
- 4. Nor in crossing any of our inclinations for the same reason.

- 5. Nor in crossing ourselves in any respect, nor in any degree, for any selfish reason whatever.
- 6. Nor does it consist in submitting to any kind or degree of evil, persecution, or privation, for any legal or selfish reason, with respect either to our temporal or eternal interests; for all such things are only some modifications of selfishness.

#### **V. What is taking up the cross.**

- 1. It consists in crossing self, from disinterested benevolence.
- 2. It consists in suffering reproach and persecution meekly and joyfully, for the same reason; that is--from true benevolence to men and supreme love to God.
- 3. It consists in crossing natural and artificial appetites and inclinations, lest their indulgence should dishonor God and injure the souls of men; and that by thus crossing ourselves we may possess the means and opportunities of doing a greater amount of good to others. Thus bearing the cross is only a modification of self-denial. There is but a shade of difference between self-denial and cross-bearing. And this is true of all the Christian graces. They are only modifications of one great principle, benevolence.

#### **VI. What is implied in taking up the cross.**

- 1. It implies true holiness of heart, or disinterested benevolence to God and man; just as self-denial does.
- 2. It implies deadness to the influence of appetite, to the influence of the world, and to a regard to reputation. A man will never take up the cross, in the denial or crossing of his appetites and in meekly suffering persecution and reproach, unless he has become dead to such things.
- 3. Cross-bearing implies the death of selfishness in general.
- 4. It implies true faith or confidence in Christ. Certainly no man will bear the cross of Christ, and patiently and joyfully suffer persecution for his sake, unless he has great confidence in Christ.
- 5. It implies such an attachment to Christ as to be willing to suffer shame, and the total loss of reputation in the world, for his sake.
- 6. It implies the doing of this with joy and not reluctantly. It is said of the Apostles when they were scourged by the Sanhedrin, and almost hissed through the streets of Jerusalem, that they departed "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."
- 7. It implies a state of mind that is ready to forsake all things, and endure all things, for his sake, as an affectionate wife would forsake all things, and joyfully go into banishment with her husband, and count herself happy in so doing; feeling, that if her husband was spared to her, it

mattered little of what else she was deprived. In short, the true spirit of cross-bearing for the sake of Christ, is a state of mind that feels Christ to be such an all-sufficient portion as to perfectly satisfy the soul, in the absence of all things else.

#### **VII. What following after Christ is not.**

- 1. It is not a change of place. When Christ was upon earth, following Him might imply going after Him, from town to town, to attend upon his personal instructions. But even then, the mere following Him from place to place, was not what was intended; for it was the state of mind upon which the Savior had his eye. Then a man might have followed Him from place to place with selfish motives. And following Christ, in the text, implies a certain state of mind.
- 2. It does not consist in following Him for reward, as he accused some in his own day, of following Him for the loaves and fishes.
- 3. It does not consist in any service of any kind rendered from any legal or selfish motives. Christ was not selfish; and no selfish mind can in any proper sense be said to follow Him.
- 4. It does not consist in imitating his life, from any fear of evil, or hope of reward. He was influenced by no such motives.

#### **VIII. What following after Christ is.**

- 1. It consists in having the same mind, spirit, motive, and end that Christ has.
- 2. It consists in being as truly and as disinterestedly devoted to the glory of God and the good of the universe as He is.
- 3. Following Christ is to possess the zeal and activity of the Son of God, in promoting this great end.
- 4. It consists in denying self as Christ did, for the glory of God and the good of men.
- 5. It consists in using the same means, from the same motives, with the same diligence, and in the same temper of mind for the promotion of the same end.
- 6. In short, it consists in imitating his example, both as it respects the spirit and life, together with the motives for exertion.

#### **IX. What is implied in following after Christ.**

- 1. Following Christ implies great confidence in Him.
- 2. It implies self-renunciation. A man must renounce himself, before he will follow Christ. Christ pleased not Himself. He sought not his own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Him. Hence, let no man think that he follows Christ, until he has renounced himself.

- 3. It implies a trust in Him for the supply of all our wants. It is the giving up of our own interest as the object of pursuit, and devoting ourselves to the glory of God and the good of the universe; cheerfully and confidently leaving our own good and all our interests to be provided for and disposed of by Him.
- 4. Following Christ, then, implies the death of selfishness.
- 5. It implies not merely and negatively the death of selfishness, but also true holiness of heart and life; or a supreme, disinterested benevolence to God, and equal benevolence to men.
- 6. It implies the final forsaking of all else for his sake--the everlasting renunciation of all ways, ends, employments, and things, inconsistent with the glory of God and the highest good of men, from truly disinterested love to Him and to the souls of men.
- 7. Daily following Christ implies, that it is not a mere experiment, for a day, or a month, but an embarkation for eternity; an eternal committing of the whole being to the same great end that Christ is pursuing.
- 8. Observe, the text assures you, that you must daily take up your cross and follow Christ. It is to be a permanent state of mind; a state of mind in opposition to a single exercise.

**X. These are indispensable conditions of salvation.**

- 1. Because nothing short of this is virtue.
- 2. Because any thing short of this but confirms selfishness.
- 3. The nature of the case shows, that these conditions are naturally indispensable to salvation. The prime idea of salvation is deliverance from sin, and confirmation in a state of holiness. And as those states of mind called self-denial, bearing the cross, and following Christ, are holiness itself, it is self-evident, that they are naturally indispensable to salvation.
- 4. The text itself is an affirmation, and a confirmation of this truth. "He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross DAILY, and follow me."

**REMARKS.**

1. From this subject, it is easy to perceive the mistake of those who suppose that self-denial implies selfishness. In preaching, a few years since, in the congregation of a brother minister, I had occasion to remark, upon the self-denial of God in the work of Atonement. Some of the members of the church were disturbed, with the idea that God could exercise self-denial, supposing that self-denial implied selfishness, and that none but a selfish being could deny self. I was informed, that one of them went to his minister, to see whether he accorded with me in my views of self-denial. He informed him that he did not agree with me, and that he thought it wrong to affirm that God exercised self-denial, inasmuch as it implied selfishness in God. Now it pains me to be obliged to say, that for a long time it has been

growing more and more evident to my mind, from personal observation, reading, reflection, and prayer, that to a most alarming extent, the very nature of the Christian graces is radically mistaken by the Church and by multitudes of ministers--that in innumerable cases mere emotion is mistaken for religion--and that to an extent truly shocking, selfishness, in one or another of its modifications, is mistaken for true piety. Not long since, the question was seriously proposed by a brother, as a question to be considered and discussed, whether a mind in a state of entire sanctification could exercise self-denial at all, and whether any thing could be possibly called self-denial in one who is entirely benevolent. Now what a wonderful mistake is this. What? Query, whether a benevolent mind can exercise self-denial! Why, it is the most manifest thing in the universe, that self-denial implies benevolence, and that that cannot be self-denial that does not deny self, from motives of disinterested benevolence. It is, therefore, so far from being true, that self-denial implies selfishness, that selfishness is entirely inconsistent with self-denial. They are exactly opposite states of mind, and can no more co-exist than light and darkness can co-exist. This mistake is very extensively made in the Church; and I do not hesitate to say, that in just as far as it is made, it is a fundamental error. It is putting darkness for light, and sin for holiness; and I must confess, it is extremely difficult for me to understand how a mind that has ever truly exercised self-denial, could fall into so strange a mistake--how a man who has ever known what it was to deny himself, from disinterested benevolence, should ever afterwards suppose that self-denial implied selfishness--and that to deny one form of selfishness for the sake of gratifying another form could be self-denial.

2. True self-denial implies entire consecration, or entire sanctification. I do not speak now of continued, or permanent, but of present sanctification. To deny self from motives of disinterested benevolence, is for the time being to obey God. It is to do your duty. In other words, it is to be in a state of entire conformity to the will of God. Nothing short of this is denying self, taking up the cross, and following Christ.

3. The fact that so few persons know what self-denial is, by their own experience, shows how few there are who exercise self-denial.

4. It would seem as if ministers are the only men, in the estimation of the Church, who are expected really to exercise any self-denial. They only are expected to labor without wages, from motives of disinterested benevolence. The churches do not pretend, in scarcely any case, to give the ministers any thing like a compensation for their labors. And in multitudes of cases they give them nothing at all. They feel as if ministers are to labor for the glory of God and the good of souls, and not for "filthy lucre." It seems to be generally understood, what self-denial in ministers is. It seems to be known, that they are to labor from motives of disinterested benevolence. They may visit the sick, and spend as much time as the physician, or more than he does, without its being so much as dreamed by any one, that they ought to have any compensation for this expenditure of time and strength. They may travel about the country, and, at the earnest request of the churches, spend a Sabbath, a week, or even a number of weeks, in laboring almost night and day, until they are prostrated and ready to die with fatigue, without so much perhaps as their traveling expenses being paid. In all this they are expected to labor from disinterested benevolence. They will spend as much time and strength in promoting the good of souls, as a lawyer would do in attending to secular affairs, where his charge would be five hundred or a thousand dollars; and if the minister should ask for a dollar of compensation he would be accused of selfishness, and laboring for "filthy lucre;" while it would not be so much as expected, that

a lawyer or a physician would expend so much time and strength, without charging enough to buy him a farm. Now the question is, how comes there to be such a public sentiment as this? What would be said of a minister, if he made a charge of attending on the sick and officiating at funerals--if he should charge as physicians charge, or as lawyers charge, for services rendered at home or abroad. And should he do this, when he has no salary and no earthly means of support, it would not alter the case in the public estimation; but he would be denounced as a hireling, a selfish, and an ungodly minister. Now I ask again, how came such a public sentiment as this to exist in the Church and in the world? I answer, it is founded in this fundamental mistake, that ministers, and ministers alone, are expected to serve God and men from motives of disinterested benevolence.--That ministers are bound to do all they can to glorify God and save the souls of men, whether they receive any earthly compensation or not, I admit and fully maintain.

I also maintain, that the churches are as solemnly bound to contribute to their support, and give them what is reasonable and just for their services as they are to support their own families, to pay their physician's bill, or the laborer that tills their ground. I am not advocating the principle, that ministers should either be allowed, or find it necessary to make a charge for preaching a sermon, a Sabbath, a week, or a month, or for visiting the sick, or for any such services. But I intend to maintain, that for all these services, they have the same right to expect a compensation from men, as lawyers, doctors, merchants, and mechanics have--that all other men are bound to be as self-denying, to perform all their services from as disinterested motives--to be willing to spend and be spent, and used all up in works of benevolence, just as ministers are bound to do. Any man, and every man has a right to expect such compensation for his labors as is reasonable and just, under the circumstances of the case. But no man has in any instance a right to make his wages the end at which he aims, and that without which he would not perform the service. The minister is to preach and labor for the glory of God and the good of souls, and not for the sake of a salary. The mechanic, the merchant, the lawyer, the physician, are all to do the same. And no one of them has a right to demand or expect any compensation, when, under similar circumstances a minister might not do the same. And now the thing I wish to impress upon your minds is this, that this public sentiment of which I am speaking reveals this alarming fact, that the Church has to a great extent lost sight of that which constitutes true religion in every body else but ministers. They expect and insist upon that in ministers, which really constitutes true religion; but that which they expect of themselves, and require of others than ministers, is nothing but sheer selfishness. They have set up one standard for ministers, and another for laymen and women. And this last has not a particle of true religion in it; for selfishness is the substance and essence of all sin; and disinterested benevolence is the substance of all true religion. And in such a world as this, to say the least, there cannot be any true religion without true self-denial. And what shall we say, when the real spirit of self-denial is so far lost sight of, and misunderstood, that only so far as it is applicable to ministers, does it seem to be recognized as even obligatory.

5. But no man can be saved, without the true self-denial for the good of others, which he feels that a minister ought to exercise. Whatever be your calling, except you pursue it from as disinterested motives, as much for the glory of God and the good of men, as you feel and know that ministers ought to do, you cannot by any possibility be saved. The same rule is applicable to both. What will ruin a minister's soul will ruin your soul. The requirement with respect to both is, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And now let me ask you, in how many instances have you charged and received pay for services, when it would in your own estimation have ruined a



minister to have done the same? Would you not feel an abhorrence of and contempt for a minister, and be one of the first to complain, and avow your convictions of his hypocrisy, should he charge for his services as you have charged for yours, and show the same reluctance to laboring without wages as you yourself do.

6. From this subject it is easy to see, that self-denial does not abridge the happiness of those who exercise it; but that, on the contrary, it is the readiest way to promote it. To be sure, our own happiness must not be the object at which we aim; for this would not be self-denial. The Lord Jesus Christ has said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and it is truly blessed to deny self for the good of others. Take the case of the man who gave the loaf to the starving family, of whom I have already spoken, and tell me, did he not experience a more noble, elevated, and soul-satisfying happiness, in saving that famishing family from starvation, than he would have done to have eaten the bread himself, although hungry and really needing it? Who can doubt it, if he was really benevolent and disinterested? I do not hesitate to say, that he who can doubt it, knows not what benevolence and self-denial are. Just so it is with all acts of real self-denial. They always afford the mind more satisfaction than an opposite course would have done; that is--the denying of self, for the sake of doing good to others, is that course of conduct most supremely pleasing and gratifying to a benevolent mind. To suppose the contrary, is a downright absurdity, a contradiction, and an overlooking of the very nature of benevolence and self-denial.

7. True self-denial is wholly indispensable to happiness in this world. Certainly a man cannot be happy, in any proper sense of the word, who is not benevolent. But if he is truly benevolent, in such a world as this, the wants, and woes, and ignorance, and wickedness of those around him, would keep him in a state of unspeakable agony, unless he were making self-denying efforts to do them good. Can a man act continually against the supreme, the strongest affection of his soul, without being made wretched by it? No, he cannot. Then a truly religious man, in other words, a man who is truly and disinterestedly benevolent, cannot be at peace with himself, only so far as he lays himself out for the glory of God and the good of men. I might indeed say this of all men, whether they are benevolent or not. But it is absurd, and a contradiction, to say, that in a world of wo and want like this, a truly benevolent mind can be otherwise than miserable, only as it puts forth the most strenuous exertions to relieve the woes, instruct the ignorance, and save the souls of men.

8. It is impossible that a truly benevolent mind, a truly religious man, should not exercise self-denial in a world like this. Benevolence is good willing. It is willing or choosing the good of others, in proportion to its relative value. The will governs the conduct. If a man, therefore, wills the good of the community in which he lives, more than he does his own individual good; if he loves his neighbor as himself, and all his neighbors as much more than he loves himself as their happiness is more valuable than his own; it is as impossible that he should not exercise self-denial for their good, as it is that he should act against his will. This brings out the demonstration that no man is a truly religious man who does not live a life of self-denial.

9. From this subject we see why it is, that so many seem to suppose that self-denial must necessarily abridge our own happiness. It certainly is only because they do not understand what self-denial is. They call that legal constrained giving up one form of selfishness for another self-denial. When they are really whipped out of some form of selfishness, and driven by the terrors of conscience, the

thunders of Sinai, or a regard to reputation, to deny themselves some indulgence, for the sake of avoiding some great evil, or attaining some great good, they call this self-denial. And being conscious, that it is to them a grievous privation and vexation, they of course suppose that self-denial is a great burden. I have often thought, that most professors of religion secretly feel as if God's service was a hard service; as if Christ's yoke was hard, instead of being easy; and his burden heavy instead of being light--that wisdom's ways are not, in their estimation, "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace;" that religion is a task, an irksome, difficult, up-hill, laborious business. It is fully manifest, that that which many call religion is really such a heavy burden; but is this the religion of the Bible? Is it true religion at all? No it is slavery, legality, selfishness, death! Enough of it would make up the very essence of hell!

10. The real enjoyment of self-denial is the true criterion by which its character may and must be tested. If you do not enjoy it--if it is not a real pleasure to you--that in which you delight and choose for its own sake--if, as a matter of fact, in any particular case it is not more grateful to you than any other course it is no true self-denial, but only selfishness. Be sure to remember, that self-denial consists in denying self, from motives of disinterested benevolence. If, then, you deny yourself, from such a motive, it must of necessity promote your happiness; as it is doing the thing you supremely love to do. Let it be for ever remembered, then, that that is not self-denial, which does not promote your present happiness more than self-gratification would have done. But here again, let it be noticed, that your own happiness must not be the object at which you aim; else it is not self-denial, but self-gratification, which you practice. There is a distinction as broad as daylight, ever to be remembered, between pursuing and finding your happiness in the duties of religion.

11. You see from this subject that God can and has exercised self-denial in the great work of Atonement, and probably in innumerable instances in the creation and government of the universe.

12. You see from this subject the great self-denial of Christ in all his sufferings and labors for the glory of God and the good of man.

13. We see that in all probability the holy angels have exercised and do continue to exercise great self-denial for the same object. The Apostle informs us that the angels "are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Now in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness, in all their journeyings to and fro--in all their watchings over, and laboring for the good of the saints, they are no doubt called to frequent acts of self-denial--to be absent from scenes in heaven that might greatly interest and benefit them--to forego many privileges, and endure much toil that is real self-denial for the sake of saving men.

14. We see that no one needs to pity those who are called to great self-denial for the glory of God and the good of men, for it is to them a real source of happiness. It is to them a greater good than any other course they could pursue. Christ is spoken of in the Bible as really enjoying the work of Atonement. It is said that "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross despising the shame." By this I do not suppose we are to understand that his personal enjoyment was the great end He had in view; but simply that as a matter of fact He counted it a pleasure and a joyful undertaking to deny Himself and bear the pains of death for sinful men. So in the case of the Apostles and

primitive saints and martyrs. Their self-denial was to them a source of real and soul-satisfying enjoyment. Paul speaks of being exceedingly joyful in all his tribulations.

15. We are nevertheless under great obligations of gratitude to those who exercise self-denial for our good, and under the greater obligation by how much the more happiness they experience in self-denial. If they did what they do grudgingly, and in such a temper as to find no happiness in it, just in that proportion we might be certain that they were not disinterested and did not aim with a single eye at promoting our good. They are happy precisely in proportion to their disinterestedness. They are happy in denying themselves for our good in just as far as they are virtuous and really aim at our good instead of their own. Hence it follows that we are under obligations of gratitude precisely in proportion to the real happiness they experience in laboring for our good.

16. You see it is a great mistake to suppose that if God and the angels and the saints really find a superlative pleasure in serving us, that this diminishes aught of our obligation to make what return we can for their labors of love. If a minister loves you well enough to labor for your good from disinterested motives, and really enjoys his labor even more than you do in receiving his instructions, nay, if he is made supremely happy in laboring day and night for your good, insomuch that he asks nothing, expects nothing, and desires nothing for his labor, it by no means follows that you are under no obligations of gratitude, and to bestow such temporal goods upon him as may add to his comfort or usefulness, or the usefulness or comfort of his family. Why, beloved, because the Father freely gave up his Son for us all; because He did it joyfully, willingly; because He found an infinite satisfaction in it; because the blessed Son of God gave his back to the smiters and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair; because he gave Himself an offering for sin, and found a superlative pleasure in becoming for your sake a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; because he could delight to die for you, and drink of the bitter cup prepared for you, do you suppose yourselves relieved from obligations to love and serve and glorify Him forever? Nay, who does not know that for these very reasons your obligations to gratitude are infinitely increased.

17. Let no one hope for salvation who does not live a life of daily self-denial. Observe what Christ says in the text: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." It is not sufficient then to practice occasional self-denial. Self must be set aside and crucified, and denied daily and continually. Your happiness must consist in disinterested endeavors to make others happy, or you never can be saved. I beg of you to understand this. Denying yourself daily, taking up your cross daily, and following Christ daily, are indispensable conditions of salvation. And the doing of this daily is as indispensable as doing it at all. Observe, Christ does not say, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself occasionally; take up the cross occasionally; and occasionally, in seasons of special excitement and revival follow me; but the doing of these things daily is here expressly made an indispensable condition of salvation. Let me impress this upon you, for it seems generally to be understood, that if persons go so far as now and then to practice what they call self-denial--now and then to take up some cross, and occasionally, in seasons of special revival, follow Christ--that these are the conditions of salvation, and about as much as can be expected of Christians in this world. Now mark, this common opinion is a fatal error. The unalterable condition of salvation is, that these things shall be done daily--that this shall be the state of the mind, and the habitual course of life--that self-interest shall be rejected as the grand end of life--that self shall be daily denied, and that daily you shall bear the cross and follow Christ.

18. Let it also be noticed that bearing the cross implies dying to our own reputation, and this is to be habitual, the daily abiding state of our hearts. It does not say merely that once in a while we shall have a season of humiliation, breaking down before God, and making ourselves of no reputation; but it implies so thorough a death to our own reputation, as that this regardlessness to our own reputation shall be the habitual state of our minds.

19. Observe that following after Christ must also be daily. You must daily aim at the same end from the same motives that He does. You must give up all your powers to the promotion of this end as He does. And this is to be done daily as an unalterable condition of salvation.

20. How infinitely diverse from this are the general notions of professing Christians in respect to the conditions of salvation. The general idea of professors of religion seems to be that if they only once in a while wake up as they call it--if they are revived now and then, at long intervals, and once in a while bluster about, and perform their duty as they call it, this will suffice as a sufficient ground of hope. And living in this way they expect to be saved. How amazing it is, that with the express declaration of Christ before them, they can dare to hope in the face of his most solemn declarations. Why, professor of religion, as sure as your soul lives, such loose notions as those that are common among professors of religion in respect to the conditions of salvation, will if you trust to them, land your soul in the depths of hell. I say again, remember that the daily doing of these things is just as expressly and indispensably a condition, as that you should do them at all. What then do you mean, to dream of eternal life while you indulge your selfishness and lust, with only now and then a spasmodic effort, when conscience can remain no longer silent, and the Spirit of God forces upon you the conviction that you are one of the greatest sinners out of hell. Then you set to blustering about and seem to suppose yourself to be religious enough in a few weeks to set off against years of selfishness and lust. Why, what do you mean?

21. How ridiculous it is for persons to call such things as they often do, self-denial and bearing the cross. Some persons will abandon the use of alcohol because its use has become disreputable, or because it is injurious to their health, or because their conscience torments them in the use of it, or because they fear they shall become drunkards, disgrace and ruin themselves, and lose their souls. And this they call self-denial, when it is after all, only denying one form of selfishness for the sake of gratifying another form. In other words, they are denying one form of selfishness for the sake of promoting self-interest on a larger scale. "Verily they have their reward." Others will abandon the use of tea, coffee, tobacco, and many such-like articles, for similar reasons, and call it self-denial. But who cannot see through this?

22. Others call it taking up the cross to pray in female prayer meetings, to speak in public, or do any thing that mortifies their pride. Now, it should be known that taking up the cross implies the death of pride--that pride or a regard to our own reputation is already dead. If this is not so, it is nonsense to talk of taking up the cross.

23. Our Lord Jesus Christ differed radically from multitudes of reformers. Reformers in general seem to aim at making as many proselytes to their peculiar views as possible, and are not wont to be so particular and searching as to render it very difficult for persons to fall in with and adopt their views.

But Christ on the contrary, when multitudes seemed to be converted, professed to believe in Him, and to follow Him, would turn upon them and cut to the very quick, informing them plainly that they could not be his disciples at all unless they forsook all that they had; unless they would deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him--that no man could be his disciple unless he would not only forsake all that he had, but would hate his dearest earthly relations, and even his own life for Christ's sake. This certainly was a very different policy from that which is pursued by many ministers of the gospel. They, instead of insisting upon daily self-denial, the renunciation of selfishness, and a life of entire consecration to God, as indispensable conditions of salvation and church membership, seem to leave these express conditions of Christ almost entirely out of view. And for the sake of increasing the members of the Church, practically at least, hold out very different, and almost infinitely lower conditions of salvation. Brethren, how dare you do this? I ask you solemnly before God and the Savior Jesus Christ if you do insist upon a life of daily self-denial, cross-bearing, and following Christ--if you do insist that unless men forsake all that they have and renounce selfishness in their business transactions and in all their ways, and that unless they live a life of entire consecration to God, they can by no possibility be saved, and have no right to a standing in the Church of God? Do let me ask what is the practical standard to which some of you, my brethren, as a matter of fact require persons to conform as conditions of church-membership and of salvation? Do you not virtually plead for and allow sin? Do you not virtually deny or leave out of view the great truth upon which Christ every where and so often insisted, that "except a man forsake all that he hath, deny himself and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple?" Instead of making this a condition of salvation as Christ does, I ask you my brethren, and I ask the churches who hear you preach if some of you do not virtually maintain or make the impression that a state of entire consecration to God, is so far from being an indispensable condition of salvation, that it is as a matter of fact never attained in this world; or at least, that it is never attained as a state in which men do as a matter of fact for any length of time continue? Now my beloved brethren, if this is true, let me get down at your feet, and beseech you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to consider what you are doing. How many of you are afraid to admit, avow, and maintain the doctrine of entire sanctification or consecration to God in this life? You are even afraid to allow that this state is ever attained and continued for any length of time by the best saints that ever lived on earth. But let me ask you, is not this state as a state made by the Lord Jesus Christ in these passages that I have so often quoted, an express and indispensable condition of salvation? If it is not, I beg of you, and conjure you to show what these passages do mean. What does Christ mean when he says "except a man forsake all that he hath he cannot be my disciple?" The Lord willing, I intend soon to give the Church my views of this declaration of Christ. When I say that this as a state is insisted on by the Lord Jesus Christ as an indispensable condition of salvation, I do not mean that the condition is that no occasional sin through the force of temptation is consistent with a state of real grace and with final salvation; but I do mean and maintain, that a state of entire consecration to God, or sanctification as a habitual state of mind is in the gospel, insisted upon as an indispensable condition of salvation; and that it is so far from being true, that this state as a state, with only occasional interruptions through the force of temptation, is never attained by the saints in this life, that under the gospel no one can be saved, nor ever has been saved, who has not attained and lived, and died in this state; a state in which entire sanctification is the rule, and sin only the exception.

If this is not the doctrine of these texts, I ask what is? Do not understand me now to affirm that a person's falling into occasional sins through the force of temptation is fatal to his salvation; but I do

wish to be understood as affirming that regeneration itself is an act of entire consecration to God--that a state of entire consecration to God is the habitual state of every real saint; and that nothing less than entire consecration to God, as a habitual state of mind ought to be insisted on as a condition of salvation. To make the impression that any thing less than this can ensure salvation is false, anti-christian, and at war with every principal of the gospel.

And now if this is so, how much blood is already in the skirts of the ministry. My brethren, I feel as if I for one ought to look to this--that I am bound to look not only to some, but to all the conditions of salvation as laid down by Christ in the gospel, and that as I value my own soul and souls of my hearers--as I value the approbation, and dread the wrath of God, I am bound to lay down no other conditions of salvation, either in doctrine or practice, than this; that unless a man forsake all that he hath--except he deny himself and take up his cross and follow Christ daily, he cannot be saved. My brethren, dare any of us require in theory or in practice any thing short of this? If we can, we are building upon Christ's foundation, wood, hay and stubble, and in the day that shall try every man's work what it is, the fruits of his labor shall be burned up.

24. What an infinitely terrible thing it is for ministers and professors of religion to be engaged in opposing the doctrine of entire sanctification or consecration to God in this life. I am amazed and distressed beyond measure to hear them speak of the dangerous tendencies of preaching this doctrine. I find it impossible to express the pain that sometimes comes over my mind when I see them hunting after and eagerly seizing upon every thing which they suppose exhibits the dangerous tendency of this doctrine. At the same time overlooking the world of facts most distressing and appalling that bring out with the force of a thousand demonstrations the dreadful tendency of the opposite doctrine. My brethren, would it not be well for us to look a little upon the other side of this question and see what is the actual tendency as developed in myriads of facts of preaching that a state of entire and continued consecration to God is not to be expected or attained in this life. Why is it that such great reaction follows revivals of religion? Why is it that the truth of the gospel can bring people along so far as to effect their conversion and then leave them to backslide. I answer unhesitatingly, that beyond that point the gospel is not preached. Instead of holding up the perfect standard of the gospel as a thing to be aimed at, actually attained and maintained, as an indispensable condition of salvation, instead of being encouraged to go right on to perfection until they stand and remain complete in all the will of God, no such end is presented to them, no such object of pursuit or of expectation is held up before them. But on the contrary it is either expressly insisted or strongly intimated that no such state ever was or ever is expected to be attained in this life. And thus discouragement is thrown in their way. A stumbling block is laid before them that just as certainly results in their backsliding as any cause produces its effect.

My dear brethren in the ministry, who among you dare to quote and enforce with the expectation that it will take effect, the following language of Paul: "Ye are the temples of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Now, my brethren will you suffer me to ask, whether you follow the example of Paul, whether in view of the exceeding great and

precious promises, you do exhort, encourage, and command Christians to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God? Observe the Apostle expected them to do this in this world; for it was "from all filthiness of the flesh," as well as "spirit" that they were to cleanse themselves. Now my beloved brethren, do you and do your churches know that you explain to them what this and similar passages mean? Do you make the impression that you expect them to do this, as you do upon sinners that you expect them to repent? How dare you, with this and multitudes of similar passages before you, stumble and talk as some of you do about the doctrine of Christian perfection? Why, some of you seem to be horrified at the very idea of expecting Christians to perfect holiness in the fear of God. The very term Christian Perfection seems to be an abomination to you, and a thing neither to be understood nor seriously insisted upon as a truth and a command of God. O, my brethren, I ask you how you dare to do this? How can you find it in your heart to do it? Will you consider these texts and tell your churches what they mean?-- Will you expound, enforce, and crowd them home, and expect your churches to receive and obey these truths? Why, how can it be possible that so many of the professed ministers of Christ are stumbling at, opposing, and even ridiculing the doctrine of Christian Perfection? My soul trembles for you. It would seem as if your attention was so taken up with the fancied dangers of enforcing the doctrine and duty of Christian Perfection, that you count it an arrant heresy, for any man to teach or expect Christians to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and this in the face of the church.--My brethren, is this the work of the gospel ministry?

About a year ago there was a powerful revival in a church not far distant from this. In the fulness of my heart I wrote to my brethren who were engaged in promoting it, beseeching them to insist upon total abstinence from sin and to press the converts up to a state of entire and continued consecration to God. I insisted upon this as the only course they could take to secure the revival against a reaction. I felt at the time agonized with the thought that there should be a reaction in that place, and could have washed the feet of the brethren with my tears, if it could have availed to persuade them so to press the converts up to a habitual state of entire consecration, as to have prevented their backsliding. But all in vain. Within a few weeks or months, the pastor began to preach himself and suffer others to preach against the doctrine of Christian Perfection in his pulpit. The result was just what might have been anticipated with as much certainty as any other event whatever. And now, although scarce a year has elapsed since the revival was all in its glory, I have heard with unutterable pain that the pastor has confessed in public, that out of the many converts that joined his church, only a comparatively small number of them are ever seen in his meetings. And yet this same dear brother seems to be still alarmed only at the tendency of preaching the doctrine of entire sanctification or consecration to God in this life. Strange to tell, he sees not, feels not, acknowledges not, the awful tendency of preaching as he has preached, and maintaining that it is a dangerous error to expect to live in a state of entire sanctification to the will of God in this life. O tell it not in Gath; let not the sound reach Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Toward this brother, toward all of my ministerial brethren, I have none but feelings of the utmost tenderness. But yet I am grieved and pained, my soul is sick with the course that many of them are taking. Afraid to do as Paul did, press the church right up to cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God, they merely satisfy themselves with saying it is a duty, it is naturally possible, but still not to be expected. Is this like Paul? Is this like Christ? Paul would say, come on, "having these promises, dearly beloved, let us, (for we can do it and must do it,) cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And Christ could say, "Be ye therefore perfect

as your Father in heaven is perfect." And yet, O dreadful to say, multitudes of ministers are opposing and even ridiculing the doctrine of Christian Perfection or entire consecration to God in this life, holding it up as a dangerous heresy, and even denying ministerial and Christian fellowship to those that believe it. Oh what a state of things is this!

## **The True Service of God**

Lecture XXIX  
March 31, 1841

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Josh 24:19: "Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for He is a holy God."

In this discussion I will show:

- I. In what the holiness of God consists.*
- II. That there are two kinds of service, both of which claim to be rendered to God.*
- III. Which constitutes the acceptable service of God.*
- IV. What is implied in it.*
- V. How these two kinds of service cannot, and how they can be distinguished from each other.*
- VI. If any man would serve the Lord, he must begin by making his heart holy.*

### **I. In what the holiness of God consists.**

- 1. It consists in benevolence, love, or good-willing; willing the universal good of being.
- 2. All his moral attributes are modifications of benevolence, and his holiness consists in a disposition, under all circumstances, to do just that which is upon the whole best to be done, and most promotive of the general good, to whatever self-denial and exertion it may call Him.

### **II. Two kinds of service, both claiming to be rendered to God.**



Legal and gospel services. Legal service is a course of life pursued, not from supreme love for and delight in it for its own sake, but from other considerations, sometimes originating merely in constraints or restraints of conscience, hope, fear, regard to reputation, personal safety, and multitudes of such like considerations.

Gospel service is not a constrained, but a joyful compliance with convictions of duty, from supreme love to the path of duty, and delight in it for its own sake. The first is regarded by the mind, as, after all, only a choice between two evils, neither of which is supremely lovely and desirable to the mind for its own sake. This is slavery, and this kind of service turns upon the very same principle upon which the service of slaves is rendered. They prefer laboring for their masters, to the evils which would result from their refusal. They therefore, upon the whole, choose to labor as they do; but it is only a choice between two evils. As liberty is out of the question, they must labor, or suffer the consequences. They therefore prefer to labor. But this, after all, is slavery. This kind of service rendered to God, is bondage and slavery.

The last, or gospel service, is regarded by the mind as supremely good or lovely, and desirable for its own sake. This is true liberty. It is the very course of life which the mind would prefer, if left free to choose between all possible courses of life; and that solely on its own account, or for the sake of its intrinsic value. I know not how to illustrate the difference between these two kinds of service, more naturally and familiarly, than by adverting to the conduct of children. They will labor, rather than be frowned upon by their parents. But labor is not regarded by them as desirable for its own sake; but is only chosen as the less of two evils. They would prefer play to labor, if left wholly to themselves. They love their amusements for their own sake. Now such is the true service of God. It is not submitted to as the less of two evils. It is not regarded merely as something that must be done, however irksome the task. It is not an up-hill business, a grievous labor, in which there is no satisfaction. But, like the plays of children, it is delighted in and loved for its own sake.

### **III. Which constitutes the acceptable service of God.**

- 1. Supreme devotedness of heart to the same end to which God is devoted. God is love, or benevolence, and is supremely devoted to the good of universal being. His heart is full of zeal, and his mind is wholly bent in promoting universal good, as far as it can possibly be done. Now the true service of God consists primarily in a heart of supreme benevolence, or of supreme devotedness to the glory of God and the interests of the universe.
- 2. It consists in the supreme devotion of the whole being to the same end to which God devotes all his attributes--to promote his own happiness and glory, not because it is his own, but because it is infinitely the greatest good in the universe--to promote the holiness and happiness of moral beings, and the universal good of sentient existence, is that to which God has devoted his entire being.
- 3. It consists in devoting the whole being to this end, for the same reasons for which God devotes Himself to the promotion of this end. Suppose you employ a servant who labors only for his wages, and feels no interest in the end which you are aiming to promote. He takes no interest in your business, for its own sake--has no disinterested desire to promote the end at which you aim; but simply labors for his wages. He begins as late in the morning, rests as long

at noon, labors as sparingly, and breaks off as early at night as will possibly do, without being curtailed in his wages. Now you rightly say this man is serving himself and not you. He is a mere eye-servant. He is entirely selfish, and has an entirely different end in view, from what you have. And now suppose the end you have in view is not selfish, is not your own aggrandizement, the promotion of your own interests of happiness, but the promotion of the general good--would you not blame such a servant for not taking an interest in the end itself? Would you not regard his selfishness with abhorrence? Would you not regard him as engaged in self-service, and as deserving the severest reprobation? Suppose a king to be entirely disinterested, and engaging all his attributes, and all his wealth, and all his time, in the disinterested promotion of the public interests--suppose him to say to his subjects, "Here, lay hold and help me to forward this great work, and as your individual interests are parts of the public interest, I will see that you have your reward. But the thing I require of you is, that you take an interest in the end for its own sake. If you do not take an interest in the end for its own sake, your labor will all be selfishness and slavery. If you do not love the work on its own account, it will of course make you miserable. It will hang heavily on your hands, and you will long for the going down of the sun. But let your heart be deeply imbued with the spirit of doing good; let this be the grand object of your life--love it for its own sake, and your labor will be to you a continual feast." Now suppose that the subjects should take hold of the work as mere mercenaries, caring for nothing but their wages, taking no interest in the public happiness and well-being; but simply serving for reward. This would be a selfish, eye-service, and not heart-service. This would be serving self, and not the king.

Now the true service of God consists, not only in devoting the whole being to the promotion of the same end, but also with the same motives, or for the same reasons; that is, from supreme benevolence, or an absorbing disposition to do good for its own sake, and because it is good.

- 4. It consists in doing all this with the same feelings with which God engages in this work. If the heart is fully devoted to this work--if the whole being is given up to it, as God's being is given up to it--and if this is done for the same reasons, and from disinterested love to the work itself, the feelings with which we engage in it will naturally and necessarily be the same in kind as those in which God engages in it. The feelings with which we engage in it and pursue it, must depend upon our motives for engaging in it. If our motives are the same with God's, our feelings will be the same in kind with his.

#### **IV. What is implied in acceptable service to God.**

- 1. This kind of service in sinners, implies a radical change of heart, from selfishness to disinterested benevolence. Here let me be understood. By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that the mind feels no interest in it; but I mean the direct opposite of this--that the mind does take the deepest, nay, a supreme interest, in promoting the good of being, for its own sake and on its own account.
- 2. It implies a deep and efficient sympathy with God, in regard to the great end of life. By deep, I mean, not a mere superficial sympathy, consisting in the emotions, but a sympathy of heart, a sympathy lying in the deep foundations of moral action. Persons may have emotions and

desires, that consist merely in the effervescence of an excited mind, while the heart, or the deep fountain of moral action, is after all supreme selfishness. By a deep sympathy, then, I mean a sympathy of heart, of will, of preference, and purpose. By an efficient sympathy, I mean an energetic, active sympathy; one that produces active and energetic effort, to glorify God, save the souls of men, and promote universal good.

- 3. This kind of service implies a continual manifestation of this state of mind, by most strenuous and self-denying efforts to promote the universal good of being.
- 4. It implies the same feelings in kind, towards whatever hinders or promotes the work. For example--It implies supreme complacency in God. God, knowing Himself to be infinitely benevolent, has a supreme complacency in Himself. Therefore every benevolent mind in the universe will feel a supreme complacency in God, because He is benevolent. We naturally and necessarily feel complacency in a being whose character is in all respects just as we would wish it to be.
- 5. It implies complacency in the character of Christians, so far as benevolence is discernible in them.
- 6. It implies grief and indignation at sin and sinners, and whatever is inconsistent with the highest good of the universe.

**V. How these two kinds of service cannot, and how they can be distinguished from each other.**

- 1. They are not always distinguishable from each other in their outward manifestations, or in the visible conduct of men. The servant who labors merely for his wages, may to most human eyes appear just as well as one who is truly disinterested in his labors. A mere legal religion may be strictly punctilious in all the outward duties of life. Such to a great extent were the Pharisees. And such have been great multitudes in every age of the Church.
- 2. They cannot always be distinguished by the amount of zeal upon religious subjects. The Pharisees were very zealous. They would compass sea and land to make one proselyte. Paul testifies, that Jews had a "zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Paul seems to have been as zealous before his conversion as afterwards. His legal and his gospel religion could not then be distinguished from each other, in the amount of zeal which he manifested while under the dominion of each.
- 3. Not always in their visible results and effects. A legal zeal may be very punctilious in the discharge of outward duty, may make many proselytes, may bring multitudes under conviction, and to embrace a legal religion. It may bring multitudes under the dominion of a religion of resolutions, and self-dependent efforts to serve the Lord. The law has its converts as well as the gospel. Persons may be baptized unto Moses as well as unto Christ. And thorough legal laborers may promote extensive apparent revivals. And indeed, they may be real revivals, so far as they go; a revival of conviction in the Church; a revival of confession; a revival of zeal; a revival of resolutions; a revival of conviction among sinners; a general awakening to religious subjects, and a revival of obtaining hopes, and engaging in the legal service of God. But all this,

without a solitary conversion to Christ and his gospel; and perhaps, with scarce an instance of bringing an individual from a state of legal slavery into the liberty of the blessed gospel. Now so far as the number of converts is concerned, so far as the number of revivals is concerned, and so far as most visible appearances go, these two kinds of service may so far resemble each other as not to be distinguished the one from the other. But--

- 4. They may be distinguished by the kind of zeal. It was the kind, and not degree of Paul's zeal, that distinguished his Christian from his legal character. His Christian zeal was benevolent, mellow, kind, compassionate, heavenly. His legal zeal was boisterous, denunciatory, censorious, hardhearted, fiery, earthly, sensual, devilish. Thus a truly Christian zeal may always be distinguished from a legal zeal, in the manifestation of deep benevolence and compassion, a mellow, chastened, heavenly sensibility to the wants and woes of men.
- 5. Gospel service may be distinguished from legal service, by the fact, that it affords to the mind the fulness of a present satisfaction and happiness. It is the mind's present solace and joy. It is its own present reward and happiness. In proof of this I observe--
  - (1.) That from the very nature of the case it must be so. The acceptable service of God is doing just that which the mind views in its own nature, as supremely desirable and agreeable. It is that which the mind loves for its own sake, and therefore naturally and necessarily makes the mind happy. The more intently the mind is engaged in this employment, the more full and perfect is its joy, from the laws of its own being. And here I must remark, that a very singular objection has been stated to this view of the subject; which is, if the mind loves the service of God for its own sake, there is no more virtue in that state, than there is in eating our food, because we love it. To this I answer--our appetite for food is constitutional, and not something in which we are voluntary; and therefore, partaking of our food because we love it is not virtuous. If our love of the service of God were involuntary and constitutional, as our appetite for food is, the service of God would not be virtuous. But it should be ever remembered, that the appetite, or disposition to serve God, consists in benevolence, or good-willing; and is therefore entirely voluntary. Indeed the very appetite is itself a choice. It is therefore in the highest degree virtuous. If our appetite for food were voluntary, and depended upon our own voluntary choice, both the exercise and the gratification of our appetite, from correct motives, would be virtuous. The virtue of serving God, then, lies in the exercise of benevolence, or in choosing to do good for its own sake. The very exercising and carrying out of this benevolence in the active service of God, necessarily brings with it a present and essential happiness. God's happiness consists in his benevolence. God has always found his happiness in the exercise of benevolence. He does not need to wait till he has done his work, before he enjoys it. He is not waiting to complete his toils, and expecting happiness only when He can sit down in supineness and inaction. The more glowing and deep his benevolence, the greater is his happiness. Just so it is with a gospel service. The mind engaged in this service feels that "an excellent oil is distilled" upon it, in the very exercise itself. It feels itself fanned by the breezes and moistened by the dews of heaven. It feels itself to be in an atmosphere of love. Its very labors are essential sweetness, and it drinks from the river of life, while it pushes its efforts to promote

universal happiness.

- o (2.) It is a course of life in which all the powers of the mind harmonize; which harmony of soul is necessary and essential happiness. Why, it is love. It is the love of God. It is the temper and spirit of God. It necessarily produces the very happiness of God in kind; and but for outward trying circumstances, would be as perfect as that which God experiences, amid his own labors of love.
  
- o (3.) In proof of this position, I quote from the Bible. Job 27:10: "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" Here it is mentioned, as one of the marks of the hypocrite, that he does not delight himself in the Almighty. It is truly wonderful to what an extent the Bible exhibits true religion as affording present joy and delight. I will only quote a few, out of the great multitude of passages upon this subject, that may serve as specimens of the light in which the Holy Scriptures present this subject: Isa. 32:17: "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." Isa. 54:13: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isa. 66:12: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." Isa. 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." Ps. 37:4: "Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." 40:8: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Heb. 10:5: "When He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." Ps. 119:14, 16, 35, 47, 70, 92, 97, 111, 127: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law. Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." Ps. 112:1: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments." Job 15:11: "Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?" Ps. 19:8-11: "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward." Acts 13:52: "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14:17: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 15: 13, 29: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." 2 Cor. 1:24: "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand." 2 Cor. 2:3: "I wrote this same unto you, lest when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all." 2 Cor. 8:2: "In a great trial of affliction, the abundance

of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Gal. 5:22: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Phil. 1:3, 4: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy." Heb. 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." 1 Pet. 1:8: "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 John 1:4: "These things write we unto you, that our joy may be full." 2 Cor. 7:4: "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." Heb. 10:34: "Ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Deut. 28:45-47: "All these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee; and they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things," &c. In this last passage the terrible curses of the law are represented as coming upon the children of Israel, because they had not rendered that service to God which made them happy. They had not joyed and delighted in the service of God. Phil 3:1: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Phil 4:4, 10: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again: wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." I Samuel 2:1: "Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord: mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation." Ps. 16:9: "My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope." Acts 5:41: "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." From these and multitudes of other passages, it is most manifest, as well as from the very nature of the case, that the acceptable service of God must constitute the present happiness of the soul.

- 6. These two kinds of service may be distinguished from each other in the fact that a legal service affords to the mind very little present satisfaction, which consists in a self-righteous peace, and the anticipation of future happiness. In proof of this I observe that the very nature of the case shows that it must be so. Inasmuch as it is not chosen for its own sake and that in which the mind supremely delights on its own account, it is often a laborious and irksome business. It is something submitted to which is not pleasant in itself, but on account of an anticipated reward. Such a man is religious for the same reason that some people take bitter medicine. The medicine is disagreeable in itself; but submitted to for the sake of an anticipated good. It is taken as the less of two evils. So a man may toil hard for the sake of his wages; but toil is not desired for its own sake, but only submitted to for the sake of the end. Just so with a legal religion. It is an up-hill business. It is regarded as the less of two evils. It is something that must not be omitted, but attended to from the dire necessity of the case. But not consisting in benevolence, not being disinterestedly loved for its own sake, it cannot, in the very nature of the case, constitute the mind's present happiness. And the principal happiness which the mind can

feel in it, is just that kind of satisfaction which a man may take in labor for the sake of the end he has in view. He would gladly forego the labor, could the end be obtained without it; but since it cannot, he submits to the labor, just in proportion as he regards the end. So when a man's convictions of the validity of religion, of the danger of hell, and the desirableness of heaven, are vivid in his own mind, he engages in the duties of religion, with a good degree of alacrity, feeling, and sensible satisfaction. Just as a man would feel a kind of satisfaction in his labor, who had a prospect of a great reward. But as soon as his convictions of sin, of danger, &c., subside, just in this proportion his religion becomes an irksome business. His prayers are short and far between, and the whole round of what he calls his religious duties drags heavily, and are a sad weight upon his shoulders. In short, his religion is slavery. It is more tolerable than hell; but it has not in it the unction and sweetness of heaven.

**VI. If any man would serve the Lord, he must begin by making his heart holy.**

- 1. God says to the wicked, "Make to yourself a new heart and a new spirit." This is the very beginning of all religion, to give up selfishness and become supremely, disinterestedly benevolent.
- 2. As a holy heart consists in this, it is impossible that any other service can be acceptable to God. Indeed it is in reality the only service that is really offered to God. A legal service is self service. It is laboring for wages. It is not doing good for the love of doing good, and for the sake of the good, but merely for the sake of the wages, and is therefore not the service of God but of self. Those therefore who have unholy hearts "cannot serve the Lord, because He is a holy God." Until they are holy they cannot engage in a holy service. When Joshua told the people they could not serve the Lord, because He is a holy God, he did not intend to tell them that they could not become holy, but that remaining unholy, they could not serve the Lord. You, therefore, who are unholy, must not think to set about the acceptable service of God without first becoming holy. This is your first work.
- 3. It is the only service that can do you any good. God cannot honestly reward a legal service by the gift of eternal life, because there is not a particle of real virtue in it. Nor can He possibly reward a legal service with eternal life; for what is eternal life but holiness and its necessary results. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that God can give you eternal life as the reward of legal service. Nor can you receive eternal life as the gift of grace, while your heart is not holy and you are not rendering to God a holy and acceptable service. It should be forever understood that if a man does not find his happiness in benevolence and in that course of life which God requires, he neither deserves to be happy, nor is it possible for God to make him happy. If he does not love his work, he does not deserve any reward for it, because his heart is not in it. Nor is it possible that he should be rewarded for his labor, unless he finds a sweetness and an enjoyment in the labor itself. Why heaven will not consist in supineness and inaction, in giving yourself up to the exercise of sweet emotions and ecstasies without benevolence and effort, but must consist in the service of God. If you are not engaged in that kind of service here which makes you happy, the same kind of service will not make you happy in heaven.
- 4. If your legal service does good to others, it is no thanks to you. If through your legal and selfish efforts others are blessed, really converted and saved, it is not because you have had this

end supremely in view, as one desired and chosen for its own sake. Therefore whoever may be blessed, you are not blessed and do not deserve to be. The conversion of souls does not fill you with joy and satisfaction, because it is not the end which you have chosen for its own sake. You do not find your reward in the very luxury of promoting the good of others. You are deceiving yourself in the anticipation of a future reward for mere legal services. This is a horrible delusion.

- 5. But in all probability you will do no good in this state of mind; for it seems to be a universal law that "like shall beget like"--slaves shall beget slaves--that being a legalist yourself, you will beget proselytes in your own likeness. Christ said of the Pharisees, "ye do compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two fold more the child of hell than yourselves." If you have not in your own experience, gone any farther than a legal religion, your spiritual children will be legalists. You may make converts, but they will not be Christians. They may be zealous, a great change may occur in them; but they will not be converts to Jesus Christ. They will not know what the true mind of God is, because you have never really and fully exhibited it to them, either in your preaching, or your temper and life. Your converts will as a general thing, fall even below you, and be two fold more the children of legality and of hell than yourself.

#### **REMARKS.**

1. If your religion does not afford you present happiness, if you do not feel that there is real salvation in it, it is a legal and not a gospel religion. Beloved, there is a sad mistake upon this subject among professing Christians. Instead of finding their religion a peace-giving, soul-satisfying employment, they think themselves to be engaged in what they call the Christian warfare, and expect to be made happy when they get to heaven, and can cease from their irksome labors. They drag on against their feelings, and elaborate a most distressing religion. The more they have of it, the more miserable they are. They keep up a continual controversy between their conscience and their hearts, supposing this inward struggle to constitute the Christian warfare. They bless themselves with the idea that their painful service will soon be over, and they shall have nothing to do but sit down in the midst of the joys of heaven.

Now the Christian warfare consists in conflicts with those temptations, persecutions and besetments, that endeavor to draw us aside from the labor in which we take so much delight. The true Christian's religion is his life. When he is left to pursue his course of doing good without opposition or temptation, he finds the service itself to be the delight and satisfaction of his soul. He knows full well that the grand difference between heaven and this state of existence lies in the fact that there he will have less interruption, temptation and resistance, and can therefore give himself up uninterruptedly and without fighting Satan, to that service in which he has so long had supreme delight. Is this your religion?

2. There is reason to believe that many of what are called revivals of religion go no farther than to make the converts mere legalists, and that the converts never get fairly into the kingdom of God. They are awakened and more or less deeply convicted, but never come to be possessed of the idea that religion is love, while their hearts remain entirely selfish. They are deceived by the vividness of their emotions and the excitement of their minds, into a belief that they are truly converted to God. In proof



of this position, observe--

(1.) The spirit with which what claim to be revivals are often conducted--the class of motives presented are merely legal. The spirit in which they are preached is merely legal, and the whole tendency of the preaching and of the manner, together with illustrations used in endeavoring to impress the minds of inquirers with the true nature of religion, of submission and true conversion, are altogether calculated to induce only a selfish religion, to bring the converts under bondage to law and to sin, instead of bringing them into the glorious liberty of the children of God. I could give multitudes of illustrations of this method of conducting revivals, that would naturally lead a reflecting mind to the conclusion that such partial exhibitions of truth, the exhibition of such a legal spirit and zeal, as are constantly presented to the minds of inquirers would have a tendency only to a legal, selfish, self-righteous religion.

(2.) Another fact to show this, is that the spirit of the converts of such revivals is often manifestly a mere legal spirit. As a matter of fact they are not brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. But instead of Gospel liberty, they are brought into legal bondage. By a little conversation with them, it appears, almost at first blush, that their religion is not love, that it is not mellow, holy, heavenly, meek, humble, broken-hearted, but is on the other hand hard-hearted, selfish, constrained, severe, unkind, sectarian and censorious.

(3.) Sometimes the inquirers are told not to expect happiness in religion, but to be willing to wait for happiness till they get to heaven; and when those who have professed submission begin more than to suspect that their submission is not of the right kind, and to complain that they don't feel right, that their hearts are hard, that they have little or no enjoyment in the duties of religion, that they are very little inclined to labor and to pray for the conversion of souls, and that as a matter of fact they do not enjoy or find themselves blessed and happy in the service of God, they are flatly told, when thus convicted by the Holy Ghost of being wrong, that they are not to expect to be happy in this world--that labor is their great business, whether they enjoy it or not--that they must not regard the feelings with which they labor, but act up to their convictions of duty, whether they enjoy this service or not. And sometimes they even go so far as to tell them that the less enjoyment they have in religion, the more virtue there is in it, as in that case their religion is not selfish, but disinterested. Now I do not hesitate to say, and I say it with grief, that in this kind of instruction there is a radical and most ruinous error, and such teaching, from its very nature, is calculated as fatally to mislead the soul as Universalism or even more so, for while it is equally false, it is much more specious than Universalism. It entirely overlooks the nature of true religion. It sets aside entirely the idea that religion is love, and that nothing but love and its necessary fruits are religion. It holds up the idea that religion consists in a mere legal conformity to convictions of duty. It is true that persons are not to wait for particular emotions of any kind, nor to be stumbled in the discharge of their religions duties, because they do not at all times experience the same inward emotions in the discharge of duty. But it is also true, that all religion is love or benevolence, and that the exercise of benevolence naturally and necessarily produces happiness, and that there is a divine sweetness, peace and

soul-satisfying happiness in the very exercise of benevolence itself. When therefore a professed convert finds as a matter of fact his religion hangs heavily, and that his religious duties lay as a weight upon his hands--to tell him this is just what he may expect--that this is no evidence that he is wrong--that this laborious and irksome business may after all be true religion, is to inculcate upon him an abominable delusion and as fatally to deceive him, as if he were taught that he could go to heaven without a change of heart.

(4.) In all such cases it is of fundamental importance to discriminate clearly between seeking happiness in religion and actually finding it. The Bible most clearly teaches us and we may learn the same from common sense and from the nature of the case, that if permanent happiness is the object of pursuit, and the grand motive which leads the mind to engage in religion, this is working for wages. It is self-righteousness, self-service, and not the true service of God. But it is also true that if the heart is truly benevolent, if the service of God is chosen and loved for its own sake, if to do good for the sake of the good and from a desire to promote the holiness and happiness of being for its own sake, be that which the mind supremely desires and chooses on its own account, it is impossible that the duties of religion should not afford an exquisite relish in themselves, and that a course of life so highly valued for its own sake, should not afford a relish of a permanent and blessed happiness. If then the convert complain that he does not enjoy the service of the Lord, he should be instantly and plainly told that he is not engaged in the service of the Lord, that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace," that "the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," and that if these are not conscious realities in his own experience, he is deceiving himself--that true religion is love or benevolence--that there is a divine sweetness and relish in benevolence--and that if he does not find in the service he renders to God, that "in the keeping of God's commandments there is great reward," it is because he does not keep them. Nothing can be of greater importance than to make the impression at once that he is a legalist and has not been born again. But instead of this, professed converts are often encouraged to rest in a legal religion as the true religion, and are only exhorted to persevere, be faithful in the discharge of duty, binding and supporting themselves by oaths and promises and resolutions, and not to expect happiness in religion till they get to heaven. O, what a terrible delusion is this. And now let me ask if this is not, as a matter of fact, the real history of many in revivals.

(5.) Another consideration that establishes the fact that multitudes of professed converts have only a legal religion is, that they so suddenly backslide and as it is commonly expressed "grow cold in religion" as soon as the effervescence of excited emotion subsides. Now whether their religion is of the heart, or merely of the emotions, can only be known as the greatness of the excitement subsides. Strong feelings or very highly excited emotions, may induce volition or a series of volitions at variance with the state or permanent preference of the will or heart. A miser may be so affected in view of some spectacle or wretchedness as to exert such a temporary influence over his will, as that by a single volition he will relieve the sufferings before him, in view of which he is so greatly excited. But this volition has been induced by an excitement of feeling in

opposition to the permanent state of the will. Now as soon as the excitement has subsided, he calls himself a fool for having been thus induced to part with his money, and almost curses himself for his folly. Now in revivals of religion, it often happens that strongly excited feeling will induce for the time being a series of volitions, that will so shape the life as really to lead us and to lead the subject of them to believe, that the heart is truly changed, that the deep moral preferences of the soul are reversed, that selfishness is given up, and that benevolence has taken its place. But let excitement fully subside, and then you will be able to discern clearly and distinctly, whether the heart is changed, or whether the volitions of the mind were only induced by temporary excitement. If it is found that the deep currents of the soul are benevolent, that selfishness in heart, life, business, and social intercourse is abandoned, and that love and disinterested benevolence, a supreme disposition to do good to all around is the real state of the heart, then you may be certain that there is true conversion, that that soul has truly entered upon the service of God, and that he is not a mere legalist, and serving for wages.

3. Converts should always be made to see, that the more disinterested they are in religion the more happy they will be; of course the less they seek happiness the more they will find it. And the less regard they have to their own happiness, the more self-sacrificing and disinterested they are, the greater will be their joy, and the fuller the tide of their blessedness. Suppose a man comes across, in the street, an object of the deepest distress and compassion. Being touched to the very quick with the spectacle before him, and from unmingled benevolence, he steps into a provision store and purchases a basket of provisions, and sets at the feet of this object of poverty and distress. The fainting starvling lifts up his streaming eyes of gratitude, speaks not, but looks unutterable thanks. Now the happiness of this benefactor would be precisely in proportion to the strength of his benevolence and disposition to do him good. If his benevolence was strong and disinterested, and he longed to do him good for its own sake, his happiness would be full and unmingled and he would find his happiness to be in proportion to his disinterestedness, and that in this thing he had found most exquisite happiness simply because he sought it not. Upon the principle that he who would lose his life for the sake of doing good, shall find it and keep it unto eternal life.

4. You can see the secret of the perseverance of the saints. They persevere in religion because they love it for its own sake.

5. You see also the secret of the apostacy of legalists. When their excitement subsides, their religion is too irksome a business for them. They abandon it because they have no heart in it. "They went out from us," says John, "because they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have remained with us." Now the same Apostle affirms that "he that is born of God doth not commit sin, because his seed remaineth in him, so that he cannot sin because he is born of God." The seed which remains in him is the love of God, the same benevolence that is in the heart of God.--This has taken the place of selfishness, has come to be the supreme ruling disposition of his soul.--And because his seed remaineth in him he cannot live in sin. And if it is found that he can live in sin, it is certain that he is not born of God.

6. Whether your religion is of the right kind or a mere legal religion, will be attested by your own consciousness. You cannot but know if you will be honest with yourselves, whether your religion is liberty or slavery. Would enough of the same kind make heaven? Or if you should multiply it a

thousand fold would it not increase your wretchedness?

7. The legality of professors is a great stumbling block to sinners, seeing as they do, that there is little, or nothing of enjoyment in the religion which they observe in some persons, they conceive of God as a hard master, of religion as a hard and cruel service, as destitute of every thing that is pleasant and sweet and soul satisfying, infinitely less delightful than the pleasures of sin; and therefore to be postponed as long as possible, and yielded to only when dire necessity forces it upon the soul. It is manifest that they look upon religion as only the less of two evils. It is better than to go to hell, but much less valuable in itself than the pleasures of the world. Now where do they get this idea; how comes it to be so almost universally prevalent among the impenitent? Why, the fact is, they receive their notions of what religion is, from what they observe among professors of religion, what they behold in their parents and relations and friends around them, who profess to be in the service of God.

8. And you can see why sinners are so reluctant to give up the pleasures of sin, and why young persons are apt to conclude that religion would set aside all their happiness. Why, this is the very idea of some professors themselves. The mother of a gay young lady, a professor of religion, a few years since was distressed that her daughter became convicted and hopefully converted in a revival of religion. "O," she said, "what a pity that such a charming girl, should be so early cut off from all the pleasures of the ball room, and secluded from the gaiety of her young friends, and shut up to the sameness and solemn performance of religious duties." I trust there are not many professedly religious mothers who would say as much as this, or even think it. And yet, if they did not, it might be, that a mere natural fear of the loss of the soul, rather than a rich experience of the joys of God's salvation, would prevent their saying it. The fact is, that multitudes of professors of religion know not what enjoyment in religion is. To them it is after all a naked reality that God is a hard master, that they have short keeping and hard labor, that they live on husks, and their father does not feed them. But this is not the religion of the gospel.--It is not the religion of love. It is self righteousness and ruin.

9. You can see how few professors of religion have truly embraced the gospel; so few indeed that when here and there a soul is found that truly enjoys the service of God, and feels constrained to speak of the joys of God's salvation, he is looked upon as a wonder, as having a great deal of animal feelings, and as being well nigh deranged. He is not unfrequently rebuked and even despised for talking so much about enjoyment in religion. He is suspected and publicly accused of selfishness, and as serving God for the loaves and fishes, without considering at all, that it is his disinterested love and labors of love that constitute his happiness.

10. There is a kind of happiness that is not religion. And wherever it appears, needs and deserves rebuke. It is the opposite extreme of a legal religion. It is antinomianism, the religion and happiness of emotions, ecstasies, and a false peace, amounting to a kind of quietism, that does little or nothing to glorify God or benefit mankind. Now between this state of feeling and the happiness of true religion there is a distinction as broad and palpable as the noon day light. The one consists in the emotion, and effervescence of excited feelings which does nothing, and the other consists in the exercise of good willing, of benevolence, and in labors of love, together with those states of the emotion that naturally and necessarily result from this state of the will. The happiness of one consists in doing nothing for the glory of God and the good of men, but simply giving up the mind to the influence of imagination and excited emotion, while the other finds its happiness in giving up the whole being to active

exertions, for the promotion of the glory of God and the salvation of men.

11. You see the necessity of a class of ministers that know, and continually experience the joys and the power of God's salvation. That such an experience is important to the promotion of true religion is evident, from the very nature of the case. How shall a man describe what true religion is, unless he has it in his own experience? How shall a man preach Christ, who does not know Christ?--How shall a man preach a religion of love, and make people understand it, who is not himself in the enjoyment of it? Isaiah says: "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." The Psalmist says: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit: Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

The grand reason why ministers promote a legal religion is, that they are themselves legalists.--They preach as far as they know, and having only the baptism of John, they have need that some one should expound unto them the way of God more perfectly. They testify what they have seen and experienced, and this, they consider to be true religion. They inculcate it upon others; being themselves in bondage, they beget children in their own likeness. They are born and continue slaves.--Nothing is more alarming to them than the idea of getting above their sins. They would even manifest indignation at the profession of sanctification on the part of any soul. They would think that surely he knows little or nothing of the evils of a wicked heart, and would look upon him as in a most deluded and self-righteous state. Why, they have never so much as conceived of gospel liberty. A religion of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, temperance, meekness, and all the graces of the Holy Spirit, what do they know of these? "Being rooted and grounded in love, and comprehending with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, of that love of God, that passeth knowledge." O, what do they know of this? Alas, the poor slaves! No, reader, they regard the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life as a most dangerous heresy; it is so infinitely at variance with their own experience, and with all that they call and really suppose to be religion, that they look upon such a sentiment, as ridiculous, and dangerous. I say then, we must have a class of ministers, the state of the Church and of the world imperiously demand it, that know what gospel liberty is. Look at Wesley and his coadjutors, at Luther and his coadjutors. Read their writings; look into Luther's Commentary, on the Epistle to the Galatians. Read the history of the life and times of those holy men.--Witness the effect of their labors. And what is the secret of all their success. The fact that they walked with God, that they were in the liberty of the gospel, that they distinguished clearly between a legal and a gospel religion, that they distinguished between the righteousness which is by faith and the righteousness of the law. In short, they pressed upon their hearers, the great idea, that God is love, that religion is love, not emotions or complacency, but benevolence, and this succeeded under God in kindling up among mankind the very fire that lives in the heart of God.

12. The truly religious man need not, and does not want to get to heaven before he is happy. He is happy here. He finds, that to be true in his own experience which James declares: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

13. Unless self-denial, and the carrying out of your benevolence, work out in you a soul-satisfying happiness, you are not truly converted.

14. Great multitudes make up their minds to serve God, without understanding definitely what it is to serve God, and many ministers preach on such texts as this: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," when they press sinners up to the point of decision, in respect to whose service they will choose, but omit accurately to discriminate between a gospel and a legal service. Now men are in the habit of seeing others serve for reward, and of serving themselves for reward. And as all their notions of service on every subject are selfish, and they have little or no idea of any other service than a selfish service, it is of indispensable importance, and fundamental to their salvation that a discrimination as clear as light be made, between a selfish and a disinterested service. And as their notions are all selfish, no pains should be spared to possess their minds fully of the true idea of a gospel service, as distinguished from a legal service. They should be shown that one is holiness and the other is sin, that one is serving God and the other is serving self, that the one is true religion and the other arrant wickedness.

15. And now, dearly beloved, as I have spread out this subject before you, let me ask you where you are. What is your true character? What is your religion? Are you a real servant of God, or are you serving yourself? Are you a legalist, or are you a Christian? Are you converted, or are you not converted? Are you free, or are you a slave? Do you walk with God in the liberty of the gospel, or are you wearing the galling yoke of the law, and in bondage to sin? O, beloved, walk up to an honest answering of these questions.--Remember, that God has said, "sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under the law but under grace." Does your experience test the truth of this? Can you honestly say "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, hath made me free from the law of sin and death," or are you still crying out in the legal experience portrayed in the 7th of Romans: "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"--My perishing and beloved souls, rest not a moment in such a state as this. This whole matter of a legal experience is full of death. It is the rottenness of a legal religion, which will lead you down to the gates of hell. O, remember that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

If then your own heart condemns you, remember that God is greater than your heart, and will condemn you. "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" "Escape for your life," and rest not till you are rooted and grounded in love.

## **Entire Consecration a Condition of Discipleship**

Lecture XXX

April 14, 1841

by Charles Grandison Finney

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Text.--Luke 14:33: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

In this discussion I design to show:

*I. What is not implied in forsaking all for Christ.*

*II. What is implied in it.*

*III. What is intended by being a disciple of Christ.*

*IV. That being his disciple is an indispensable condition of salvation.*

*V. That forsaking all is an indispensable condition of discipleship.*

*VI. We have no right to profess discipleship nor to ask for divine teaching, only so far as we live in a state of entire consecration to God.*

**I. What is not implied in forsaking all for Christ.**

- 1. It does not imply the abandonment of our possessions and friends to go on a pilgrimage.
- 2. It does not imply that the actual parting with all our possessions is indispensable to being a disciple of Christ.
- 3. Nor is it a mere barter or exchange, a giving up of worldly things in exchange for eternal life. Many persons seem to have an idea, that forsaking all for Christ is merely giving up worldly things, for the sake of obtaining heavenly things. This would turn upon the mere principle of speculation, and is by no means the thing intended in the text.

**II. What is implied in forsaking all for Christ.**

- 1. A radical change of heart, from selfishness to benevolence. In other words, a forsaking, abandoning self-interest as the end of pursuit--an absolute and everlasting giving up of self-interest and self-gratification, as the end of life; and the entering into the views, sympathies, and designs of Christ, in promoting the glory of God, and the interests of his kingdom.
- 2. It implies the abandonment in heart and life, of the principle of self-ownership. Sinners are continually acting upon the principle of self-ownership; and practically insist upon their right to dispose of themselves as they please, without being accountable to God or man. Christ abhors this course of conduct, denies their right thus to dispose of themselves, claims them as his own,

as having been at first created by Him, and afterwards redeemed by his blood. He therefore insists, that they shall cease to contend, in theory and practice, that they are their own, and have a right to dispose of themselves as they please.

- 3. It implies the renunciation of the claim of absolute proprietorship in any thing--that you recognize the truth, that you have nothing that you can properly call your own--that every thing is God's, and that you are his steward.
- 4. It implies the hearty and practical recognition of universal stewardship--that every thing you have and are--your being--life, health, body, soul, time, possessions, friends, all, are to be regarded and treated by you as in the highest possible sense belonging to God; and that for every thing, you are to give Him, as his steward, a strict and impartial account.
- 5. It implies that you as really feel, that all your possessions are God's, and that you have no right to dispose of them, only by his order, as you would feel in regard to a farm, a house, or any piece of property which you had sold, and of which you had given title deeds, and only remained in possession as a tenant at will. Suppose you had sold your farm or your house; title deeds had been executed, delivered, and recorded, and you were only allowed to retain them, till the owner comes or sends some one to take possession. In such a case, you understand very well in what light you would regard his property. If you are an honest man, you would not think of selling it, or making any disposition of it whatever, except to husband it to the best advantage for the owner--that whenever he should appear or send to take possession, you would have no thought of demurring to his right to take possession. You would feel all the time, "This is not mine." This would have a practical bearing upon all your conduct. You would expect of course, at any time, to deliver possession at the call of the owner, without gainsaying or resistance.
- 6. It implies a course of conduct in all respects corresponding to the state of mind of which I have just spoken. It is a state of mind in which you would no more think of disposing of the things in your possession without consulting God, and being satisfied in respect to his will upon the subject, than you would think of going and disposing of your neighbor's goods without consulting him. The man who forsakes all, in the sense of the text, feels, that with respect to his fellow men, his possessions are his own in reference to them; but in reference to God, his conscious and practical feeling is, that these things are no more his--that he has no more right to dispose of them, but at the bidding of God, than he has to dispose of his neighbor's things.
- 7. It implies the doing of all this from love to God, and not, as I have said, upon the principle of barter and exchange. It is to be done upon the same principle upon which an affectionate wife would forsake all that she has, and go into banishment with her husband, from affection to him, and not because she expected a reward.
- 8. It implies the joyful, and not constrained doing of this. It is to be considered, not as the least of two evils, but as that which is right in itself, just, useful, and to be chosen and loved for its own sake. It really is strictly just, for as a matter of fact you are not your own, and are mere tenants at will, with respect to all your possessions. It is therefore, really a matter of strict justice--that you should forsake all that you have, in the sense explained. It should be done by



you, because it is just and right, and from a love to right--not from fear of punishment if you do not do it.

- 9. It implies entire consecration to God of yourself and all that you have and are; and nothing short of this is implied in forsaking all for Christ.

### **III. What is intended by being a disciple of Christ.**

- 1. A disciple is a pupil. Therefore, to be a disciple of Christ is to be his pupil, and have Him for a teacher.
- 2. To be a disciple of Christ, is to be a Christian--a follower of Christ--one devoted to his interest--one who embraces his principles, believes his doctrine, and follows his example.

### **IV. Being Christ's disciple, or divine teaching, is an express and indispensable condition of salvation.**

- 1. The doctrine of the indispensable necessity of the teachings of the Holy Spirit, to the salvation of the soul, is abundantly taught in the Bible--so abundantly, that I need not take up your time in quoting proof texts.
- 2. It is also evident from the nature of the case. Words are only signs of ideas. They possess us of no ideas, where we have no experience. They are a mere foreign language, unless we have the idea in our mind which they are designed to represent, or unless we have some experience that shall enable us to understand the meaning of the words used.
- 3. Words expressive of spiritual truth are figurative, as a thing of course; and but for the influence of the Holy Spirit, we should not get hold of the real meaning of words any farther than our natural experience of things would place us in circumstances to understand it. A selfish mind may and does understand enough to convict and condemn it, and enough to enable the mind, were it disposed, to render an acceptable obedience to God. But as the unregenerate man is wholly indisposed to obey God, as a matter of fact, he does not and will not understand enough of divine truth to induce him to change his heart, without the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the necessity of being taught by Christ.

### **V. Forsaking all is an indispensable condition of discipleship.**

- 1. The text--"Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."
- 2. The nature of the case:
  - (1.) Nothing short of this is conversion, or regeneration. Regeneration consists in renouncing selfishness, and becoming supremely benevolent. It consists in a change of heart.

- (2.) Nothing short of this is virtue; because, nothing short of this is right. A man has not done right until he has done all that justice requires. Justice requires entire renunciation of self-interest, as the great end of life, and a cordial and universal consecration of self and all that we have to God. Until a man has done this, he has in no sense done right. Till he has done this, he is a dishonest man; a defrauder and robber of God; and there is not and cannot be a particle of virtue in him.
- (3.) It is naturally indispensable to salvation. The prime idea of salvation is holiness. A man can neither be holy nor happy, without forsaking all he has, in the sense in which I have explained it. Without this, he can be at peace neither with God nor with himself. It is just what God demands, what his own conscience demands, and what the universe demands of him. Until he does this, it is impossible that he should have peace.
- 3. It is indispensable to divine teaching:
  - (1.) Because the renunciation of selfishness, as the rule of life, and a state of entire consecration to his service, are naturally indispensable to a right understanding of his views, sentiments, and instructions.
  - (2.) There must be a similarity of views, feelings, and experience, between two persons, or they cannot fairly understand each other. Now if you are selfish, and He supremely benevolent, there is of necessity such an exact contrariety in your views, feelings, and states of mind, as to render it next to impossible for you to understand Him. All your habits of thinking and reasoning, all your understanding of language, is in accordance with the supremely selfish state of your heart. How, then, will you understand the language of one whose state of mind is in all respects the exact opposite of your own? How remarkable it is, that as soon as a person becomes thoroughly converted, the Bible, which had before been to him a dead letter, becomes at once so plain and simple, that that which was before read without any interest or understanding, appears all new, plain, glorious; and the mind is filled with wonder, that the Bible has never appeared so before. This is the natural result of being in a state of mind similar to that of the writers of the Bible. When persons speak to us in our own language, and upon a subject in which we strongly sympathize with them, we understand them with the utmost ease. But if in the opposite state of mind, we almost invariably misunderstand them.
  - (3.) Without this state of mind, Christ cannot teach you; because you will not study. It is in vain for any one to attempt to teach another, if he will not yield up his mind to the investigation and consideration of the subject. Therefore, except you forsake your selfishness, become truly benevolent, and engage heart and soul with Christ, in building up his kingdom, you will have no such interest in the end as to give up your mind to the study and understanding of the means by which the end is to be obtained.
  - (4.) Unless you forsake all that you have, Christ cannot teach you, because you will not be candid. What he says will not be received by you with honesty, candor and a disposition to know and do the truth.

- (5.) Nor will you be diligent, without this state of mind, in searching out his meaning.
- (6.) Nor will you understand the doctrines of self-denial which He teaches. Without a self-denying state of mind, without that state of mind which forsakes all that we have, and abandons selfishness in every form and degree, we shall not of course understand the doctrines of self-denial as taught by Christ.
- (7.) Without this state of mind, you will resist, when he rebukes your prejudices, selfishness and lust.
- (8.) The doctrines of the cross cannot be received without the spirit of cross-bearing. Hence cross-bearing is forever indispensable to discipleship.

**VI. We have no right to profess discipleship, nor to ask for divine teaching, only so far as we live in a state of entire consecration to God.**

- 1. Because this is the express condition of discipleship.
- 2. Because the Bible invariably represents the beginning of true religion as an act of entire consecration. It is, in the Bible, spoken of as a radical change of moral character, as a change of heart, as a new birth.
- 3. The nature of the case shows that nothing short of this can be either virtue or obedience to God.
- 4. It is tempting God to profess discipleship without possessing that state of mind which is the expressed and indispensable condition of discipleship.
- 5. It is tempting God to ask for divine teaching, or to ask Christ to be our teacher, unless we fulfill the condition upon the fulfillment of which alone, we can become his disciples. Certainly He has a right to impose such conditions upon us. Nay, He is bound to do so. Both justice and the nature of the case render such a condition indispensable. And is it not insulting Him to ask for divine teaching, to profess to be his disciples, while as a matter of fact, we do not fulfill the expressed condition of discipleship? Have we a right to retain our selfishness--to live in any form of sin--to reject the condition--and yet claim to be his disciples, and come to Him for instruction, as if we fulfilled the condition? Surely we have no such right, and every such expectation is vain.
- 6. All professions of discipleship without the spirit of entire consecration, are regarded by Christ as highly abominable and dishonorable to Him. To all such persons He says, "I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

**REMARKS.**

1. Entire consecration and entire sanctification are the same thing. I have been amazed many times of late to hear persons contending for the doctrine of entire consecration to God in this life, who pretend to reject the doctrine of entire sanctification, as if they were different things. Now the very meaning of the term Sanctification is consecration. This is the meaning of the term as used both in the Old and New Testaments. It is really astonishing to see how much play there can be upon a word among professedly good men. They dare not deny the doctrine of entire consecration to God in this life, but having committed themselves against the doctrine of entire sanctification, they try to preserve their consistency in holding to the one and rejecting the other, thus assuming what is certainly contrary to fact, that they are different things.

It is not a little curious that some writers in the religious periodicals of the day, are opposing the doctrine of entire sanctification, while they profess that all ought to preach the doctrine of entire consecration, not only as a thing attainable, but as something which we are to expect to attain in this life. I say again, to sanctify is to set apart; to consecrate to the service of God. Consecration and sanctification to God are words of precisely similar import.

2. So far is entire sanctification from being unattainable or a rare attainment with real Christians in this life, that it is the very beginning of true religion in all the saints. It is the very first act of obedience. This has been substantially insisted upon by all the leading orthodox writers for ages. Pres. Edwards says upon this subject, in his treatise upon the "Religious Affections," vol. 5 of his Works, pp. 264-5:

"And this point may be farther illustrated and confirmed, if it be considered, that the holy scriptures abundantly place sincerity and soundness in religion, in making a full choice of God as our only Lord and portion, forsaking all for Him, and in a full determination of the will for God and Christ, on counting the cost; in our hearts closing and complying with the religion of Jesus Christ, with all that belongs to it, embracing it with all its difficulties, as it were hating our dearest earthly enjoyments, and even our own lives, for Christ; giving up ourselves with all that we have, wholly and for ever unto Christ, without keeping back any thing or making any reserve. In one word, sincerity consists in the great duty of self-denial for Christ; or in denying, that is, as it were disowning and renouncing ourselves for Him, making ourselves nothing that He may be all. Mat. 5:29, 30: 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.' Mat. 6:24: 'No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.' Mat. 10:37-39: 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.' Mat. 13:44-46. Luke 14:16-20, 25-33, and 16:13. Rom. 6:3-8. Gal 2:20, and 6:14. Phil. 3:7-10. 1 John 2:15. Rev. 14:4. Gen. 12:1-4, with Heb. 11:8-10. Gen. 22:12, and Heb. 11:17, 24-27. Deut. 13:6, and 33:9. Now surely having a heart to forsake all for Christ, tends to actually forsaking all for Him, so far as there is occasion, and we have the

trial. Having a heart to deny ourselves for Christ, tends to denying ourselves in deed, when Christ and self-interest stand in competition. A giving up of ourselves, with all that we have, in our hearts, without making any reserve there, tends to our behaving ourselves universally as his, as subject to his will, and devoted to his ends. Our hearts entirely closing with the religion of Jesus, with all that belongs to it, and as attended with all its difficulties, upon a deliberate counting of the cost, tends to a universal closing with the same in act and deed, and actually going through all the difficulties we meet with in the way of religion, and so holding out with patience and perseverance."

Now here President Edwards expressly maintains all that is asserted in this discourse in respect to the real meaning of this text, and fully confirms the idea that entire consecration in the sense here explained is implied in "sincerity" in religion, and that it is indispensable to the existence of true religion in the soul. Indeed, he here fully asserts all that any of us at Oberlin have ever pretended to teach on the subject of entire sanctification; for observe, that he teaches in this paragraph, where he is discoursing particularly upon the nature or attributes of true religion, not only entire, but also continued sanctification. This Pres. Edwards says is indispensable to "sincerity or soundness in religion at all." And let me ask, suppose any person to be just what Pres. Edwards here asserts to belong to and implied in the very existence of religion in the soul, what more does God require of him? Just read over the paragraph again, and see if the orthodox Pres. Edwards does not teach the very doctrine, in all its length and breadth, for which we have contended. He is not speaking of some rare attainment in religion, but of that which is indispensable to the very beginning of religion, as that without which there is no "sincerity or soundness in religion."

President Edwards, then, with all his fears of the doctrine of Christian Perfection, when describing true religion, asserts and maintains the very sentiment for which we contend, only changing the phraseology, but manifestly meaning the same thing.

3. What a deplorable state of things is that when the church and its ministers, many of them, seriously call in question the practical attainability, in this life, of that which constitutes the very beginning of true religion.

4. Nor is the fact that religion consists in entire consecration, at all inconsistent with growth in grace. To grow in grace is to grow in favor with God, for this is the meaning of the language. A child may consecrate all its little powers to God, and yet continue to grow in grace, that is, in the favor of God. This is asserted to have been actually the case with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The word rendered "in favor," in the case of Christ, being that which is elsewhere rendered grace. As knowledge extends, holiness will ever extend; and thus the saints will grow in grace to all eternity.

5. You can see why Christ found fault with the members of one of the churches for having left its "first love." Their first love was right. It was entire consecration. And He regarded their having left their first love as an act of apostasy, for which He threatened them with destruction.

6. As regeneration consists in entire sanctification, or consecration to God, the only question that can reasonably be agitated is in respect to its permanency--whether, as a matter of fact, we may expect to continue in our first love--whether we may expect to abide in a state of entire consecration, or whether backsliding is a thing to be expected of course?

7. Who, after all, can really doubt that, by the grace of God, a convert may avoid backsliding? Who can really doubt, if he be properly instructed, that he may continue to grow in grace, as he grows in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, until he becomes rooted and grounded in love?

8. But this would be a state of permanent or continued sanctification. To my mind it is really shocking, that the Church should be alarmed when it is taught that persons are to expect to attain a state of entire sanctification in this life. It is certainly a monstrous error, to maintain that any thing short of entire consecration to God is regeneration. If any thing short of this is admitted by the teachers of religion to be true religion, it will inevitably lead the Church into a fatal error. And here I could inquire of my brethren upon my knees in agony, whether it is not true that the preaching of the present day often makes the impression that entire consecration to God is a rare attainment--something to be aimed at indeed--but seldom if ever reached in this life--that the best services of the saints, and the best states of mind in which they are, are mingled with much that is wrong--and that they hourly, nay, continually offend and even sin in their most holy performances. Now how infinitely dangerous is such teaching as this. How many thousands of souls have gone to hell, because they have been led to believe they could be truly religious and yet be conscious of sin all the time. They have been convicted, felt condemned, and conscious indeed that their best performances were sinful. But they have been taught that this is the case with all true saints, and that a consciousness of present sin is not at all inconsistent with their being saints. Nay, that the more deeply conscious they are, of sinning daily, in word, thought and deed, the greater is the evidence of their humility, knowledge of their own hearts, and of the soundness of their piety. Now I humbly ask is this the standard God has set up? Does this look like complying with the conditions of this and many similar texts? Is this daily living in sin consistent with being a disciple of Christ? I beseech you, my brethren, look to this, and see whether the blood of deceived professors is not to be found in your skirts. Why, some of you talk about the dangerous tendency of preaching the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life. What can it mean, my brethren, that you do not perceive the dangerous tendency of preaching the opposite doctrine--the absolutely ruinous tendency of admitting, for one moment, that any thing less than a state of entire consecration, is at all acceptable to God, or at all consistent with the existence of true religion. Here I wish to be understood. I do not mean to be understood, that a person's occasionally falling into sin, is entirely inconsistent with his ever having been converted, or with his being a true Christian. But I do mean, and I solemnly believe, that Christ meant to teach, that nothing is acceptable to God, short of entire obedience; and that every act which is really acceptable to God implies entire consecration to God. I have so recently addressed you upon this subject, that I need not enlarge upon these thoughts.

9. Continuance in your first love, or in a state of entire consecration, or sanctification to God, is indispensable to the enjoyment of divine teaching. Remember, I beseech you, that this is the express condition, upon which alone you are to expect the teachings of Christ. Unless, therefore, you continue in this state, daily and hourly fulfill this condition, you have no right to come to Christ, expecting to be taught of Him. If you do expect it, you will not receive it. If you pray for the teachings of the Holy Spirit, you will not receive his influences, unless you live up to his divine instructions, obey all the light you have, and thus live in a state of entire consecration.

10. You see why so few persons really enjoy the continual teachings of the Holy Spirit--why they so

often pray for the Spirit to teach them, and are not taught by Him. Why is it, that you, my brethren, so often ask for the Holy Spirit, and pray for divine guidance and teaching, and do not receive what you ask? I can answer for you. It is because you do not fulfill the condition, upon which alone you are to receive his influences. You are indulging some form of selfishness. You do not literally forsake all that you have. If you did, you might approach Christ, at any time, with the assurance that He will teach you. But as it is, He says to you, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?" "Why do you claim me as your teacher, and come to me for instruction, when you do not comply with the expressed conditions, upon which alone I have promised to teach you?"

11. You see that whenever you go to pray for divine teaching, that this question must be distinctly before you, whether you so live in the fulfillment of the condition, that you have a right to ask for his instruction? Many persons live in selfishness. They are as conscious, that they do not live in a state of entire consecration, as they are that they live at all. And yet they continue to pray for divine teaching, as if they fulfilled the condition. Sometimes they deceive themselves, by thinking they are taught of Christ, when they are only amusing themselves with their own delusions, or following the suggestions of Satan. At other times they so often pray for divine teaching, with a consciousness that they do not receive it, as to become discouraged, and feel as if praying was of but very little use. They really doubt, whether the promises of Christ mean what they say. In all this they overlook the fact, that there is an express condition to these promises, although not in all cases immediately connected with them. Yet, in our text, and in multitudes of similar passages, it is expressed in the plainest language; with which they do not comply.

12. You see why the Bible is so little understood, even by the Church of God. While the church is in such a state as to doubt whether, as a matter of fact they are expected to live one single day without sin, it is no wonder they do not enjoy divine teaching. How can they understand the Bible without the Spirit of God? And how can they have the Holy Ghost without being in a state of entire consecration, or in other words, without living in all respects up to the best light they have? When you obey one truth, Christ will teach you another. And of what use is it for Him to continue to teach, while you refuse to obey?

13. You can see why so few persons make a thorough proficiency in Theological study. If young men in the study of Theology, or ministers of any age, neglect to fulfill the conditions, and live in a state of entire consecration to God, they will not, and cannot of course enjoy divine teaching, and of course, will make very little proficiency in Theological study.

14. You can see why ministers are so often at a loss to know what to preach; seem to be so dull and dark, and feel it so difficult to prepare for the pulpit. If they lived in a state of entire consecration, their feelings would be the very reverse of all this. They would enjoy the continual teaching of Christ. They would continually feed the Church with knowledge and understanding. And out of their belly, as Christ has said, would flow rivers of living water.

15. You can see from this subject, what great injustice a minister does to Christ, and to the Church to which he ministers, if he does not live in a state of entire consecration to God. Why, suppose a Church employ a minister, and instead of his living in such a manner as to enjoy divine teaching, he indulges selfishness, appetite and lust, and thus deprives himself of the teaching of Christ. How infinitely does

it endanger souls! How greatly does it dishonor God!

16. How much of the praying for the influence of the Holy Spirit is really mocking and tempting God. See that band of selfish professors of religion. They are assembled for a prayer meeting. Every one of them perhaps, is as conscious that he does not live up to the best light he has, that he does not forsake all that he has and live in a state of entire consecration to God, as he is of his own existence. Now what are they assembled for? Why, to pray for divine teaching, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them and upon others. Indeed. And is not this tempting God? You ought to remember the word of the Lord in Ezek. 14:3: "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?" Now see these same professors daily around the family altar, praying for divine teaching, without so much as seriously intending to live for a single day in a state of entire consecration to God. Why do they make such prayers? Why do they indulge the expectation of mercy, the influence of Christ's Spirit to instruct them? I answer, because they are not themselves thoroughly and continually taught, that a state of entire consecration is the indispensable condition of being a disciple of Christ. Why, instead of this, the impression is made upon them, that a state of entire consecration is the rarest attainment in the world. And thus they live on, dragging their way down to death and hell, afraid of the doctrine of entire consecration to God in this life--and well, with their views, they may be, for surely it is something entirely inconsistent with their experience. And when shall they ever have a different experience, unless the teachers of religion thoroughly awake to a state of entire consecration themselves, and to the duty of insisting universally upon entire consecration as the indispensable condition of discipleship?

17. Now, beloved, is it not one of the most astonishing things in the world, that with this and so many similar texts upon this subject in the hands of the Church, a state of entire consecration should be so little insisted upon, as indispensable to any degree of true religion?

18. Forsaking all that you have, deadness to selfishness, and to other lovers, is indispensable to the enjoyment of God and of Christ. A wife enjoys the society of her husband just in proportion as her heart is swallowed up in him. His presence is no satisfaction to her if she does not love him. If she have other lovers, the presence of her husband is but an annoyance to her. Just so with you. Unless you are supremely devoted to Christ, his presence would be but an annoyance to you.

19. You see why He so often cuts off every dependence on an idol. He is jealous over you with a godly jealousy. If He sees you going after idols and other lovers, He will often interfere and remove them out of the way.

20. The doctrine of entire consecration or entire sanctification in this life is no new doctrine. It is as old as the Bible, and as old as true religion. And as I said before, the only question respects the continuance and permanency of this state in this life, and not at all whether a state of entire consecration is attained in the present life.

21. Sinners can see what they have to do to become Christians. You must renounce your selfishness and become supremely and disinterestedly benevolent. You must change your heart, forsake all that you have and consecrate your all to Christ.



22. To refuse or neglect to do this is to continue in a state of high-handed injustice and rebellion against God. It is refusing to render to God that which belongs to Him. It is to refuse to become an honest man, to do what is right because it is right. Until you do this, God cannot and ought not to forgive you.

23. And let me remind you all once more, that when you go to God in prayer, if you would be heard, you must go with the consciousness that you fulfill the condition; and remember, that if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." I Jn. 3:20-22. Now, therefore, I beseech you, remember to fulfill the condition, that you may enjoy the teaching of Christ. Except you be his disciple, you cannot be saved. And you cannot be his disciple, only as you "forsake all that you have."

## **A Seared Conscience- No.'s 1 & 2**

Lectures XXXI & XXXII

April 28, 1841

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--1 Tim. 4:2: "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

In this discussion I will show:

*I. What conscience is not.*

*II. What it is.*

*III. What is intended by a seared conscience.*

*IV. The evidences of a seared conscience.*

*V. How it becomes seared.*

*VI. Consequences of a seared conscience.*

### **I. What conscience is not.**

- 1. It is not the mere knowledge of right and wrong.
- 2. It is not the mere knowledge of whether we do or do not, have or have not done, or been, or said, or felt right or wrong.

## **II. What conscience is.**

- 1. Conscience may be regarded, either as a power or as an act of the mind. In the former case, it is that power of the mind that affirms and enforces moral obligation, and that pronounces upon the desert of obedience or of disobedience. Conscience is not a legislator that makes law, but a judge that convicts of guilt, passes sentence, in respect to the past, and decrees and enforces moral obligation to obey law, in regard to the future. Conscience, as a judge, smiles upon obedience, and frowns upon disobedience.

As an act of the mind, conscience is an affirmation or testifying state of the reason, in respect--

- (1.) To the agreement or disagreement of the will with the law of God.
- (2.) With respect to the moral character of this agreement or disagreement of the will with the law of God.
- (3.) With respect to the good or ill desert of this agreement or disagreement.
- (4.) With respect to our moral obligation to obey in future. In short, it is the conscious affirmation or felt testimony of the reason upon these points. It seems sometimes to be used in the Bible as including that state of the sensibility, compunction, and distress on the one hand, or of conscious peace and happiness on the other, that is naturally connected with the emphatic affirmations of reason. The Bible is not given in philosophical language; but for the most part in popular language. And I am persuaded, that the popular understanding of the term conscience often, if not always, includes that state of the sensibility which we call remorse, or approbation. I do not, in this definition, intend to speak in strictly scientific language; and what I have said is sufficiently accurate for the purpose of possessing the minds of those who do not study metaphysics, of what is intended by conscience.

## **III. What is intended by a seared conscience.**

- 1. It is the refusal or neglect of the reason, or that power of the mind, whatever you may please to call it, which makes the affirmations of which I have just spoken, to enter into judgment, and make these emphatic representations of moral obligation or of guilt.
- 2. A man may know his duty, without feeling impelled by an emphatic affirmation of moral obligation to do it.
- 3. He may know that he is or has been wrong, without the consciousness of being arraigned,

convicted of guilt, and condemned. This state of mind clearly indicates a seared conscience.

- 4. The figurative language of the text implies, a state of insensibility to moral obligation, and of ill desert for moral delinquency.
- 5. A seared conscience may be general or particular; that is, the mind may become generally insensible to moral obligation and the ill desert of sin; or this insensibility may be confined to particular sins.

#### **IV. What are evidences of a seared conscience.**

- 1. A general apathy on moral subjects, is conclusive evidence of a generally seared conscience, and is a most guilty and alarming state of mind.
- 2. Apathy on particular moral subjects, is an evidence of a seared conscience, in respect to those particular subjects.
- 3. When questions that concern our own well-being, or the well-being of others, are not regarded and treated as moral questions. For example--when the Abolition of Slavery, Temperance, Moral Reform, Politics, Business Principles, Physiological and Dietetic Reform--when these, I say, are not treated as moral questions, and as imposing moral obligation, the conscience must be in a seared state.
- 4. When questions that respect our own usefulness, or the usefulness of others, are not treated as moral questions, it is because the conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 5. When the choice of a profession, companion for life, or any thing else, that must increase or diminish, or in any way have a bearing upon the moral influence we are to exert upon the world, fails to be regarded and treated as a moral question, of serious and deeply solemn import, and as imposing moral obligation of awful magnitude, conscience must be seared with a hot iron.
- 6. When you can neglect to inform yourselves, on such subjects, without a sense of guilt; especially when the means of information are within your reach; and still more especially, if the subject be presented to your consideration, if, under such circumstances, you can remain quiet in ignorance, in respect to any question of usefulness or duty, without a deep sense of guilt, it brings out the demonstration that your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 7. When you can neglect any known duty without the bitterness of remorse, your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 8. When you can trifle with your health; go out in the snow or wet, with thin shoes and hose, or in any way inappropriately clothed, unless you are under the necessity of doing so, your conscience must be seared with a hot iron. When you can neglect to ventilate your room, see that you have not too little or too much fire--in short, when you can in any way trifle with your health, that precious gift of God, without conviction of guilt, your conscience is alarmingly seared.

- 9. When you can trifle with your time; spend it in reading plays, and novels, mere slang in newspapers, or in any other way, squander an hour or a moment of your precious time, without compunction, your conscience is already seared.
- 10. When you can hinder others and trifle with their precious time, without remorse, your conscience is seared. Suppose you have an appointment to meet others on business, and are behind your time, and hinder them; what an evil is this. If you can be guilty of it without remorse, your conscience is seared as with a hot iron. If you have boarders, and do not prepare their meals punctually, but hinder them by not having their meals in readiness at the specified moment; you have done them and the cause of God an injury. And if you do not feel condemned for this, it is because your conscience is seared.
- 11. If you do not feel condemned for coming late to meeting, and disturbing the worship of God's house, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron. Especially is this true, if you are a minister, and are in the habit of being behind your time.
- 12. If you can stand and talk with and hinder a man while at work, or in any way cause him to spend a moment's time in vain, without remorse, it is an evidence that your conscience is seared.
- 13. When you can squander your possessions in any way, and consume them upon your lusts, without remorse, your conscience is seared as with a hot iron. If you can spend God's money for tobacco, or any unnecessary and unwholesome articles of luxury or dress, without deep compunction, it shows conclusively that your conscience, upon those subjects, is seared with a hot iron.
- 14. When you do not feel that you are stewards, and absolutely and practically regard yourselves in this light, in respect to all the possessions you have, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 15. When you can in any way disregard the rights of others, in things never so trifling, it indicates a seared conscience.
- 16. When you can neglect to pay your honest debts, or when you can consider yourself as not to blame for being in debt, especially when your debts were not contracted under the pressure of an absolute necessity, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 17. When you can lay a stumbling block before a brother, without compunction or remorse; when you can indulge in any course of life that has a tendency to mislead him--when you can unnecessarily try his temper, say or do any thing that has a tendency to lead him into sin, it indicates a seared conscience.
- 18. When you can suffer difficulties between yourselves and others to remain unsettled, without using every Christian means to adjust them, it proves that your conscience is seared as with a

hot iron.

- 19. When you can be in the habit of borrowing and using your neighbor's tools, without perceiving and feeling the injurious tendency of such conduct, and without realizing the pernicious principle on which such a practice turns, it is because you have a seared conscience. Many persons act as if they supposed that conscience had to do with but one side of this question--that it is the lender exclusively, and not the borrower, who is to look to his conscience, and see that he does not violate the principles of benevolence. But let us look at the principle contained in this. If you borrow money of a man, you expect to pay him interest, or at least to restore the same amount you borrow; but if you borrow a man's coat or tools, that are injured by wearing, it is the lender and not the borrower, that has to pay the interest, and often a very high rate of interest too. Many a man has lost his tools, and paid at the rate of twenty-five per cent for the privilege of lending them. Now suppose a man has a hundred dollars in money. Money is scarce, and a hundred men desire to borrow it, every one in his turn. And now suppose each one should wear a dollar out of it. The man's hundred dollars are soon used up. But suppose a man should come to you and ask you to lend him money, and insist upon it that you should pay him interest, instead of his paying you interest, and you should say, "Why, I never heard of such a request! Do you ask me to lend you money and pay you interest besides?" Now any man would be ashamed, and would have reason to be ashamed, to make such a request; and his naked selfishness would in such a case be most manifest to every one. And who would think of accusing the lender of selfishness, in such a case, if he should refuse to let his money go for nothing, pay interest besides, and finally take the trouble to go after it. And yet this involves precisely the same principle upon which many persons conduct, in the neighborhoods where they live, in continually borrowing and using up their neighbors' tools, and perhaps compelling them to go after them, and that too without compunction or remorse. Nay, so far are they from feeling compunction or remorse, and perceiving that they are actuated by the most unpardonable selfishness, that they would complain, and suppose themselves to have a right to complain of the selfishness of a neighbor who should refuse to indulge them in acting upon such principles.

By this I do not mean to say, or intimate, that it is not proper and a duty, in certain cases, for neighbors to borrow and use each other's tools. But this I do say, that the practice as practiced, is unjustifiable. Borrowing should not be resorted to, except in cases where a man might, without any cause for blushing, ask a man to lend him money, not only without interest, but also ask him to pay interest.

- 20. When you can neglect secret prayer, without feeling condemned, and a great sense of guilt resting upon you, it is because you have a seared conscience.
- 21. The same is true when you can perform secret prayer slightly, with little or no feeling, faith, or earnestness.
- 22. The same is true, when you can indulge wandering thoughts, and use words in prayer without scarcely knowing what you say, and all this without deep compunction and remorse. This state of mind is a certain indication of a seared conscience.

- 23. When any duty is urged upon you, without your feeling the force of moral obligation to perform it--when truth and argument do not take hold of your mind, and deeply impress you with a sense of responsibility--and when, in such a case, you do not feel the impressive affirmations of conscience, impelling you to the discharge of duty, it indicates a seared conscience.
- 24. When you can satisfy yourselves with the outward performance of duty, while your heart is not right--when you can satisfy yourselves with the mere form of religion and duty, while your heart is not deeply engaged in it, and this without a deep sense of guilt, it indicates a seared conscience.
- 25. When you can neglect the means of grace, or attend upon them carelessly, in a prayerless, heartless manner--when you can indulge wandering thoughts under preaching or in reading your Bible; when you can go to and return from meeting, without earnest prayer, that the word may be blessed to you--when you can hear and soon forget what you hear, without solemnly laying it to heart, with a fixed purpose of entire obedience--when these things can be without deep compunction, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 26. When you can satisfy yourself with any thing, as a performance of duty, while you are not actuated by love, without compunction, it is because your conscience is seared, and become very superficial in its affirmations.
- 27. When light upon any subject does not cause your conscience to enter into judgment, strongly affirm moral obligation, and pronounce its sentence upon you, if you neglect your duty, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 28. When evidence makes but little impression upon you--when it does but little good to reason with you--when light, truth, argument, seem to pass over your mind, without lodging in it--when you are not convicted and converted, by a reasonable degree of evidence--when you do not feel yourself shut up to the necessity of yielding to a preponderance of evidence, or falling under deep condemnation, it is because your conscience is seared.
- 29. When the discussion of any important practical question can be postponed, and give place to matters of less importance--when you can lay up such a question for future consideration, and go on in courses that are at least questionable, merely designing at some future time to examine and settle the question--when this can be done without a deep sense of guilt, it shows that the conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 30. When any form of selfishness can be indulged, without compunction, it is because you have a seared conscience.
- 31. When you can transact business upon selfish principles, take advantages in business, that shall put money in your own pocket at the expense of another--when you can enrich yourself by any employment, without regarding the interest of those with whom you deal, as you do your own, your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

- 32. When you can complain of a want of conviction of sin, this is evidence of a seared conscience.
- 33. When you can neglect to make confession of your sins to those who have been injured by them, and thus persist in your injustice and wickedness, without remorse, your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 34. When you can make excuses for not confessing--when you do not feel impelled by a sense of duty to make full confession--when you can satisfy yourself with a heartless, constrained, or partial confession--when you can be satisfied with a private confession, when it ought to be public--when you can be satisfied with confession, without repentance--your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 35. When you can neglect to make restitution, to the extent of your ability--when you can retain in your possession that which in equity belongs to another--in short, when you can hold on to possessions that were obtained by a violation of the great law that requires you to love your neighbor as yourself--when you can hold on to them, without restoring them to their rightful owners, when it is in your power, it is a demonstration of a seared conscience.
- 36. When you have no sense of moral obligation in respect to those habits of life, that have an influence upon your brethren, your family, the community in which you dwell, and upon the world at large, it is because your conscience is seared. For example--if you have no conscience on the subject of retiring to rest in due season, and rising in the morning also at such an hour as best consists with health--if you can habituate or allow yourself, on any occasion, without necessity, to sit up late at night and rise late in the morning--if you can have no system in this respect, no principle, no conscience about it--if these things are left without consideration or reflection, to the neglect and injury of your own health, the injury of your family, and of course to the injury of the Church and the world, your conscience must be seared with a hot iron. If you have no conscience in respect to observing these things, for your family's sake; and if you do not require them and all under your control to have system, principle and conscience upon these subjects, from which they will no more depart without imperative necessity than they would go without their necessary food, it is because your conscience is seared.
- 37. When you have no conscience in regard to your modes of dress--if you can compress your chest with tight lacing, or in any other way expose your health, for the sake of personal appearance, without compunction of conscience, it is because it is seared with a hot iron.
- 38. When you can wear ornamental dress, consult appearance rather than utility, in your dress and equipage; can have regard to the fashion, rather than to health, utility, or Christian economy, without compunction, your conscience is seared.
- 39. When you can neglect cleanliness, in respect to your person, your dress, your house, or your furniture, your conscience is seared.

- 40. When you can neglect to attend to things in their proper season, or only transact your business in a careless and slovenly manner--when you can leave your tools where you use them, without putting them in their place--when you can leave them exposed to the weather, leave your barn doors open, and things around you in a state of confusion and disorder--when you can waste any thing--in short, whenever you can neglect to attend to every duty that belongs to you, at the right time, in the right manner, and in all respects as it ought to be attended to, without feeling condemned for this neglect, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 41. Whenever you can, through any neglect or carelessness, break any thing, injure the tools, furniture, or any thing else with which you are entrusted, whether it belongs to yourself or any one else, without compunction, your conscience is seared.
- 42. When you can neglect to ventilate your rooms, air your beds and clothing--neglect to exercise, labor, or rest, or to attend to any thing else that your health and highest usefulness demand, without a sense of guilt and condemnation, your conscience is seared.
- 43. When you can neglect to support the institutions of the gospel, to the extent of your ability, to pay your minister's salary, to aid in the support of the expenses of the church--when you can see the house of God lie waste, the doors and windows out of repair, the house in a filthy state, the stoves out of order, and things at loose ends--when you can suffer these things to be, without deep compunction of conscience, your conscience is seared with a hot iron; and when a church is in a state to suffer such things, without deep remorse and self-condemnation, the conscience of the church is seared.
- 44. But to notice again personal habits, if you have no system, no conscience, no principles in respect to the hours of eating and drinking, but allow yourselves to consult convenience rather than physiological law, taking your meals at one time many hours apart, and at other times within three or four hours of each other, thus recklessly violating the laws of God established in your own constitution, your conscience is seared.
- 45. If you have no conscience in respect to the kinds of food and clothing, with which you attempt to supply the physiological wants of your system, if you can neglect to inform yourself in respect to what your habits ought to be in order to secure your highest health and usefulness, if you can make your depraved appetites the guide and measure of indulgence, without deep remorse, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 46. When you can waste God's money in administering to your lusts, when you can buy tobacco, tea, coffee, and such like fashionable but pernicious articles without deep compunction and remorse, your conscience is seared with a hot iron.
- 47. When you can say you have no conscience on these subjects, when you can give countenance to these practices, and to the use of these articles at home or abroad, when you can use them yourselves, or furnish them for your friends, and thus countenance practices by which the Church is expending a hundred or a thousand times as much in poisons, and in the gratification of depraved artificial appetites, as it is for building up the cause of Christ and



saving deathless souls from hell, when you can hear the wail of hundreds of millions of immortal beings coming upon every wind of heaven and crying out for the bread of life, and still have no conscience on the subject of the use of these pernicious articles, by which the Church is poisoned, and the heathen robbed of the everlasting gospel of the blessed God--if you have no conscience on such subjects as these, it is because your conscience is seared with a hot iron.

- 48. When you can see the Church indulging in such things and not reprove them, at home or abroad, especially by the impressive lesson of your own example, you must be extremely hardened, and your conscience seared as with a hot iron.
- 49. When you can neglect to scrutinize your motives of action, and go on day after day without self-examination in this respect, when you can neglect to exercise a godly jealousy over yourself, without remorse, your conscience is seared.
- 50. When you can speak evil of a neighbor, when you can publish his real or supposed faults without necessity, and do this without remorse, your conscience is seared.
- 51. When you can suffer sin upon a brother without faithfully reprovng him and yet not feel compunction of conscience, it is because it is seared.
- 52. When you can feel contempt for the person or talents of any one without deep remorse, it is because your conscience is seared.
- 53. When you can think of sin without horror, something as they would feel at such a thought in heaven, it is because your conscience is seared. How think you an angel would feel if the thought should come over his mind--to-day I shall sin against God? How would a saint in heaven feel under the same impression? Why, it would come over all heaven like the shock of an earthquake. They would all stand aghast and grow pale, would hang up their harps, and wail out with pain at the thought that one of their inhabitants should sin against God. Now what state of mind must that be when you can expect to sin without the deepest horror, without feeling a chill come over you and your blood almost coagulate in your veins. What, sin against God! Why, if the thought does not shock and agonize you, if the expectation that you shall sin does not seem even more terrible to you than death, where is your conscience--in what state of mind are you? Have you any sympathy with heaven? No, indeed. And perhaps I might and ought to say that if you can think of sinning without the most excruciating agony, you are even more callous than they are in hell.

#### **V. How the conscience becomes seared.**

- 1. The conscience becomes seared by the will resisting the affirmations of reason. The conscience is now generally supposed to be a function of the reason. Whether it is regarded in this light or not, it is certain that it becomes seared when the will opposes itself and continues opposed to the decisions of the reason.
- 2. Especially does the conscience become seared, when the will persists in courses directly

denounced or condemned by the conscience. In such cases the conscience soon becomes indignantly silent and leaves the soul stupefied to pursue its course of disobedience.

- 3. It is often seared by an individual's resorting to sophistry to justify any course of disobedience.
- 4. It becomes seared by breaking resolutions. When you allow yourself to break over or violate a resolution to do your duty, you have done much to sear and stifle your conscience.
- 5. When you violate your promise on any subject you have done much to sear your conscience. If you persist in this violation your conscience will become seared with a hot iron.
- 6. Conscience becomes seared by diverting the attention of the mind from the moral character of your own actions. If you suffer yourself to pass along without attending to the moral quality of your actions, your conscience will soon become seared with a hot iron.
- 7. Indulgence in known sin of any kind will greatly and rapidly sear your conscience.
- 8. Especially indulgence in presumptuous sins or those sins already put under the condemning sentence of conscience. Whenever conscience has called your attention to the sinfulness of any act or course of action and you still persist in it, this is a presumptuous sin, and such a course will soon cause your conscience to become seared with a hot iron.
- 9. By indulgence in that, the lawfulness of which is regarded as doubtful by you. In speaking on the subject of meats offered to idols, the Apostle says "he that doubteth is damned (or condemned) if he eat," manifestly recognizing the principle that whatever is of doubtful lawfulness, is to be omitted on pain of condemnation, and if persisted in, the conscience will soon become seared. Thus many persons indulge in things, the lawfulness of which they at first doubt; but directly their conscience becomes so seared that they no longer think with any degree of uneasiness whether it is doubtful or not, and they come to have no doubts about it, simply because their conscience has become seared with a hot iron.
- 10. By hypocritical professions conscience becomes seared--by insincere professions of friendship, or by any insincerity whatever, the conscience will soon become so seared that it can be practiced without remorse.
- 11. By holding on to hope already, and perhaps often, pronounced hypocritical by the decisions of conscience, it will be seared, and the hope, perhaps, grow firmer and firmer. Less and less doubt will be entertained of its genuineness in proportion as the conscience becomes seared.
- 12. By indulging the appetites and passions conscience becomes seared. When persons allow themselves to eat too much, at improper seasons, and improper kinds of food, merely to gratify their appetites, their conscience will soon become so seared, that they can indulge in such things without compunction. They can then go on and break down their health, and even destroy their lives by these indulgences, and then stupidly and madly ascribe their broken down

health and premature death to a mysterious providence.

- 13. By indulging evil tempers, pride, vanity, envy, jealousy, ambition, prejudice, hatred, whatever unholy temper is indulged, will soon so sear the conscience as to leave the mind in a state of great apathy in regard to its moral character.
- 14. By indulging evil habits of any kind, using tobacco in any form, or intoxicating drinks, indulging in solitary sins or secret wickedness of any kind, the conscience becomes seared in an awful and alarming manner. How often do we find persons who can indulge in the use of tobacco, and sometimes even ministers of the gospel, can indulge themselves in that filthy abomination without remorse.
- 15. Conscience is seared by evil speaking. When you allow yourselves to speak unnecessarily of a brother's faults, or even uncharitably to speak of the wickedest man on earth, you do much to sear your conscience and blunt your moral sensibilities.
- 16. By self-justifying excuses conscience becomes seared. Whenever you resort to any form of excuse for sin, you not only harden your heart but sear your conscience, until by and by you may come into such a state as to be in a great measure satisfied with your own excuses, and fatally deceive your own soul.
- 17. By procrastinating the performance of duty. Whenever you defer the performance of present duty or decline or neglect to attend to that now which ought to be done at the present time, you sear your own conscience.
- 18. By attempts to defend error conscience becomes seared. How often men have begun only to attempt the defense of that which they knew to be error, and have ended in believing their own lie to the destruction of their souls. It is a fearful thing to attempt to defend error on any subject, and very few courses are more certain to result in a seared conscience, a hard heart and a ruined soul than this.
- 19. By watching for the halting of others, the conscience becomes seared. How many men by giving up their attention to the sins of others, have overlooked their own sins until their conscience has become seared with a hot iron. In this state of mind they can see enough to blame in others, but very little in themselves. They can become censorious and denunciatory, and wonder at the long-suffering of God in sparing others in the midst of their awful iniquity, almost insensible of the fact that they themselves are among the greatest sinners out of hell.
- 20. By neglecting to administer reproof to those whose sins are known to us. The conscience soon becomes so seared that we can indulge in the same things ourselves with very little compunction.
- 21. By resenting or resisting reproof when admonished by others, by calling it censoriousness and denunciation, caviling at the manner and spirit of reproof, instead of exclaiming with David when reproved by Nathan--"I have sinned against the Lord." This is one of the ways in which I

have observed that ministers are exceedingly apt to sear their own conscience. You may have observed that they are particularly apt, at least some of them to resist and resent reproof, and sear their own conscience in a most alarming manner, while they are not ashamed to manifest a spirit under reproof which they would not hesitate severely to rebuke in anybody else.

- 22. By mocking God in prayer and in other devotional duties. This also is one of the ways in which church officers and especially ministers of the gospel, are exceedingly in danger of searing their conscience. If they suffer their religious exercises to become professional rather than strictly devotional, if they suffer themselves to pray and preach and exhort because it is their business, when their hearts are not deeply imbued with the spirit of devotion, then conscience soon becomes so seared that they are ripe for ecclesiastical denunciation, excision, opposition to revivals, and almost every species of reform. How often and how distressingly has this been manifest. And what is worse than all, the conscience becomes so seared, that for these things they will not suffer reproof if faithfully administered and with the utmost kindness, without manifesting great indignation and perhaps a spirit of revenge. O, with what pain do I say this of some of the ministers of the everlasting gospel.
- 23. By grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit many sear their conscience. Many persons stifle and quench conviction until they have very little more moral sensibility than a beast.
- 24. Again by neglecting and refusing to act up to light as fast as received.
- 25. By neglecting to reach after light on every question of duty.
- 26. By neglecting universal reformation. If reformation be not universal, it cannot truly go forward at all. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all." The indulgence of any form of sin renders all obedience for the time being impossible. It is a state of mind the direct opposite of holiness. If in any thing therefore you neglect reformation, if you do not extend it universally over the whole field of moral obligation, your conscience will soon become seared with a hot iron.
- 27. By transacting business on worldly principles. No man can adopt the common business maxims of the world, and act upon them with a clear conscience. The law of God requires you to love your neighbor as yourself. Who then can adopt the principle of making the best bargain possible, consulting only self-interest, without deeply and rapidly searing his conscience?
- 28. By engaging in party politics. By this I do not say that all attention to politics will sear the conscience. For as human governments are necessary, politics are to be a part of every man's religion. But mark what I say. No man can go with a party as a party, vote for the candidates and support the measures of a party, without rapidly and deeply searing his conscience. How many young converts have rapidly and ruinously backslidden by engaging in party politics and by transacting business upon worldly principles. Why it is as certain as that your soul lives, if you do these things your conscience will become seared with a hot iron.
- 29. By exaggeration, or putting a false coloring upon facts related by you, or a hypocritical

covering up of the real truth, where truth ought to be known, conscience becomes seared.

- 30. By dishonesty in small matters, taking trifling advantage in weights and measures, little negligences in the transaction of business for others, coming late to labor, squandering scraps of time, by standing still or other inattention to business when in the employment of others, and by thousands of nameless little dishonesties, the conscience becomes deeply and ruinously seared.
- 31. By speaking evil of others, by receiving much good at the hand of others without any endeavor to repay them or do them good. I might pursue this part of the subject to any length, but must break off here.

I am reluctantly compelled to omit the remaining head and some remarks till the next.

## LECTURE XXXII.

May 12, 1841

### **A SEARED CONSCIENCE--No. 2**

Text.--1 Tim. 4:2: "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

In continuing this subject I am to show:

#### **VI. The consequences of a seared conscience.**

- 1. A certain delusion in regard to your character and deserts. If your conscience becomes so seared as not to call your particular attention to the moral quality of your actions, you are already under a deep and damning delusion in regard to your real character before God.
- 2. A false security, arising out of a delusion in respect to your real deserts.
- 3. A false hope may be, and probably will be another result of a seared conscience. If your conscience is seared, you will almost of course mistake a mere Antinomian religion for the true religion, and hold on to a hope that is but as a spider's web.
- 4. A false peace, or mistaking a mere apathy on moral subjects and in respect to the moral quality of your actions, for that peace which they have who love the law of God.
- 5. An abandonment by the Spirit of God. Indeed, the very fact that your conscience is seared, is an evidence that the Spirit has forsaken you. And when your conscience becomes seared, it may prevent his return for ever.
- 6. You may be given up to the buffetings of Satan, until he may bewilder, harass, and deceive you; till he has led you to destroy your own life.

- 7. You may be given up to believe a lie, that you may be damned.
- 8. False anticipations in regard to your future usefulness. If your conscience has become seared, you may rest assured, you will do little or no good in the world. And as a general truth, you will be useless, in proportion as your conscience is seared.
- 9. Another consequence may be, a broken down constitution. If you have, and will have no conscience in regard to your physiological and dietetic habits; if you will neglect or resist the light, and even sneer at these reforms, you may expect, sooner or later, to experience at least the penalty of violated physical law, in a broken down constitution, and a premature grave.
- 10. Another consequence may be, a worse than useless life. Do but persist in your dietetic errors, trample down the laws of your being, and madly presume upon the strength of your constitution, until you become a dyspeptic, or until some form of chronic disease has seized upon you, and ten to one if your life is not worse than useless in the world. In such circumstances, you may be so hardened, and your conscience so seared, as not to be ashamed to complain of your ill-health, and think yourself abused, if you do not have the sympathy and assiduous attention of all around you. But mark what I say. In such cases, God as deeply abhors the diseased state of your body, as if you had those forms of disease that are universally known to be a consequence of vile indulgences. If you had one of those diseases, you would expect contempt, rather than pity and sympathy. And how is it, that your conscience is so seared with a hot iron, that you can have any other form of disease, which is the result of a reckless violation of physical law, without shame and deep remorse? For myself, I cannot be sick, unless I have been placed in such circumstances as necessarily to overwork my organs, without feeling the deepest shame and remorse. All sickness is the result of violated physical law; and when that violation can be avoided, that is a deep sin and shame, that produces sickness. But all this you may overlook, and will overlook, if your conscience becomes seared. And you may go down to your grave and to hell, under the deep abhorrence of God, for your reckless violations of the laws of your being; pitying yourself, and ascribing both your disease and death to a mysterious providence.
- 11. If you sear your conscience, your influence will be pernicious upon all who come within its reach. If they have confidence in you, they will be emboldened to practice what they see you practice, to say, do, and neglect, what they behold in you. And thus you may become a pest and a curse to the community in which you live.
- 12. You may become a great annoyance to those who are around you. I would as soon have a pestilential disease in my family as a person with a seared conscience, who can violate the Sabbath by improper conversation, improper reading, a trifling and gossiping spirit, who has no conscience in respect to attending to those things that are expected of him--can say, do, and omit many things that are inconsistent with the law of love, and yet have no conscience about it. Such a person is an insufferable annoyance and a nuisance in any family.
- 13. If your conscience is seared, you may in all probability ruin your posterity, if you have any. Your reckless violations of the law of love will inculcate lessons upon them that will probably

ruin their souls.

- 14. If your conscience is seared, you will entail ruin upon the country in which you dwell, just in proportion to the amount of your influence. Are you a minister, a deacon, an elder, a man or woman of leading influence--how dreadful must be your recklessness when your conscience has become seared with a hot iron. Perhaps you can use or vend intoxicating drinks; perhaps you can use or vend tobacco; perhaps you can encourage the Church and community in the use of tea and coffee, and other worse than useless articles of luxury, and have no conscience about it--you can listen to the appeals and wails of six hundred millions of heathen, and complain of hard times, and yet have no conscience on the subject. Perhaps in a great measure through your example, the Church and the community of which you are a member are expending vastly more, merely to gratify their appetites, and indulge their lusts, than to save a world from eternal hell, and you have no conscience about it. "O shame, where is thy blush?" O man, where is your conscience?
- 15. If your conscience becomes seared you will certainly do much to depress the standard of holiness, to resist the principles of reform, and hinder the conversion of the world. You will be right in the way, and yet perhaps the last man to be sensible of it. You will be a real and terrible curse to the world, and yet imagine that you are in a good degree useful.
- 16. If your conscience becomes seared, you may, as Achan did, bring the curse of God upon the community to which you belong.
- 17. If you are impenitent sinners, if your conscience becomes seared, it will effectually prevent your conversion.
- 18. If you have ever been converted, and your conscience becomes seared, it will effectually prevent your sanctification.
- 19. If it becomes seared, it may lead you into a deep delusion in respect to the degree in which you are sanctified, and you may vainly imagine, that you live without sin, while you are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.
- 20. If your conscience becomes seared, you will feel very little horror at the idea of sinning against God. With a seared conscience, you can expect to sin, more or less, as a thing of course, from day to day, without feeling such abhorrence of sin as to make you avoid it as you would avoid the gates of death. Nay, if your conscience becomes seared, you may plead for sin, defend it as something unavoidable, which nobody is expected to live without; and may wallow in your iniquities with very little more remorse than a swine.

## REMARKS.

1. From this subject we see why many persons have no conscience on a great variety of moral questions. Few things are more common, than to find even professors of religion, when expostulated with about certain habits and practices, which are as manifestly sinful, when viewed in the light of God's law, as any thing whatever, reply, that they have no conscientious scruples, and indeed that they

have no conscience upon the subject. They can practice many forms of intemperance, trifle with their health, squander their time and money, neglect to save, and do much to injure the world, in many ways, and yet have no conscience about it.

2. Their having no conscience on such questions, is no proof that they are not guilty in the sight of God, and that their practices are not contrary to the law of God. Their consciences are seared, and, for the time being, maintain an indignant silence. But does this prove, that what they are doing is not displeasing to God?

3. A silent or a seared conscience is a conclusive evidence that you are wrong. Conscience is never silent with respect to what is right, and will always smile its approbation, and fill the mind with peace, when you do right. When, therefore, you have no conscience at all, upon a subject--when you are not impressed with a sense of doing either morally right or wrong--when you are neither filled with peace nor stung with remorse, you may rest assured that you are wrong, and that conscience is maintaining an indignant silence.

4. A professor of religion with a seared conscience is more injurious to the cause of religion than many infidels. Who professes to look to an infidel as an example on moral subjects? But let a professor of religion have a seared conscience, and make no scruple to practice any form of intemperance, trifle with the Sabbath, become excited in party politics, transact business upon selfish principles, engage in novel reading, squander his money upon his lusts, throw away his time, speak evil of his neighbors, or indulge in any form of sin, and his example is a thrust at the very vitals of religion. Why, he is a professor of religion! It is therefore taken for granted, that almost any thing he may do is right, or that to say the least it is not inconsistent with salvation. And thus multitudes are emboldened in sin.

5. You see that many persons mistake a seared for an approving conscience. They profess to be conscientious in what they are doing, evidently meaning by this that they feel no compunction in doing as they do, while it is manifest that they have not the peace of God, the deep approbation of conscience in the course they are pursuing. Now the absence of the approving smiles of conscience should teach them, that they are laboring under a delusion in supposing themselves to act in accordance with the dictates of conscience.

6. You see from this subject how it is that many professors of religion manage to retain their hope, notwithstanding they are as manifestly in their selfishness and sin, as they are in the world. The fact is, that their conscience has become seared with a hot iron. And having very little sense of moral obligation, they pass along securely with a lie in their right hand. To them the words of the prophet apply with great emphasis: "A deceived heart hath turned them aside so that they cannot deliver their soul, nor say, have I not a lie in my right hand?"

7. There are many persons whose consciences are seared on almost all moral subjects, and seem to have been so for a long time. They seldom or never appear to be impressed with the deep conviction that they deserve the damnation of hell. Others seem to have a conscience measurably awake on some subjects, but profoundly asleep upon other subjects, where they have for a long time resisted truth and indulged in sin.



8. It is easy to see why persons become Universalists, and reject the idea that sin deserves eternal punishment. I doubt whether there was ever a case, since the world began, in which a man became a Universalist until his conscience became seared. Nay, I doubt whether it is naturally possible for a man, with a thoroughly developed and active conscience, to doubt the justice of eternal punishment.

9. You see the importance of cultivating, especially in children, a quick, sound, thorough conscience. Their reason should be developed as early as possible, so as to give conscience, at the earliest possible hour, an influence over their will, before their habits of indulging the flesh have become too much confirmed to render it hardly possible for them to be converted.

10. You see why there is so much indulging the flesh among professors of religion, without remorse, notwithstanding they are expressly commanded to "put on Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Yet, as a general thing, I cannot perceive that they are not just as eager in their inquiries and efforts to obtain those things that will gratify their appetites, as most of the ungodly are. They are as great epicures, seem to take as much pains, and are at as much expense to gratify their tastes, and seem to lay as much stress upon mere gustatory enjoyment, as if to gratify their appetites is the end for which they live. Many of them will manifest as much uneasiness, and even disgust and loathing, at a plain, simple, wholesome diet, as ungodly sinners do. And yet, they appear to have no conscience on the subject. And farther, they can, not only gratify their appetite for food or drink, but their hearts seem set upon gratifying all their animal appetites and passions; and instead of "keeping their bodies under, and bringing them into subjection," they seem to have given up the rein to appetite. An Apostle might say of them, "Their god is their belly, they glory in their shame, and mind earthly things."

11. You see why so many can allow themselves to be ignorant on so many important practical questions, without remorse. Why they never have examined many questions of great moment that have often been pressed upon their attention, and when the means of knowledge are within their reach, and yet have no conscience about them.

12. When the conscience becomes seared upon one subject, it will in all probability become seared upon other subjects. And by a natural process, it will ultimately become generally seared, and prepare the way for embracing Universalism and infidelity. I might easily explain the philosophy of this, but have already said so much in this discourse that, at present, I must defer the explanation.

13. You see the infinite importance of a quick and searching conscience. It is wholly indispensable to growth in grace. There can be no such thing as a healthy piety without it.

14. But especially is a quick and searching conscience important to a gospel minister. If his conscience is seared, many sins will be practiced by himself, and suffered to exist among his people, without his reproof or even seeing them.

15. This subject shows why so many forms of sin are suffered to exist in some churches; so much selfishness, worldly-mindedness, pride, vanity, luxury, speculation, novel reading, party going, evil speaking, and many forms of sin, are allowed to exist from year to year, without rebuke, and without

hardly appearing to be perceived by the minister. Now who does not see, that such a minister is "a blind leader of the blind?" His conscience is so seared, that he has very little moral sensibility. If his conscience were awake, such a state of things would wring his heart with insupportable anguish. He could not hold his peace. He would cry out in his pangs. His soul would be in travail day and night. He would lift up his voice like a trumpet, and rebuke those iniquities, come on him what would.

16. You can see the grand secret of the barrenness of many ministers. Having a seared conscience they know not how to bring the Church under conviction for their sins. They do not know how to develop the conscience, either of saints or sinners. They know not how to enter into the secret workings of the human heart, and ferret out the various forms of iniquity that are lurking there. They do not know how to carry the light of the law of God into every department of human action, and so to develop conscience as to send a thrill of agony along every fibre of the moral nature, while indulging in any form of sin. The fact is, that if a man would get at the conscience of others, he must have a conscience himself. And again, I say, a minister with a seared conscience is "a blind leader of the blind."

17. Let this subject be a warning to young men who are in a course of preparation for the gospel ministry. My dear brethren, I beseech you to remember, that your consciences need to be cultivated as much as your intellect. And do remember, that a thorough preparation for the ministry implies, the education of the whole man. And unless your moral powers be developed, your conscience quickened, and kept in a state of intense sensibility, however great your intellectual progress may be, you can never make a useful minister.

18. We see from this subject, why so few young men do, as a matter of fact, make thorough, efficient and successful ministers. Why, in how many forms of sin do they habitually indulge, while in college, and indeed through all their course of education. While they are disciplining their intellect and acquiring a knowledge of the sciences, they are benumbing and searing their consciences. They are, as it were, putting out the eyes of their minds, on moral subjects. In short, they are doing just what will effectually disqualify them for, and render it impossible that they should ever make successful ministers. My dear young brethren, if in your education, you indulge any form of sin; if you do not as assiduously cultivate a tender conscience, as you pursue any branch of education whatever, you not only entirely overlook what constitutes a thorough course of preparation, but, on the contrary, are taking a course that is a mere burlesque upon the idea of a thorough preparation for the ministry.

19. We see that it is utterly in vain to talk so loud and boastingly about a thorough course of training for the ministry, while so much sin is allowed among the young men in the course of training, and so little pains are taken to develop and quicken their consciences and sanctify their hearts. As a matter of fact, the present courses of education for the ministry are, to a great extent, a failure. It is in vain to deny this. It is worse than in vain--it is arrant wickedness, to deny it. "Facts are stubborn things." And the average rate of ministerial usefulness, throughout the whole of Christendom, affords a demonstration of this truth, that ought to alarm and agonize the Church, and cause those of us who are engaged in educating ministers to tremble, and inquire upon our knees before the blessed God, what it is that makes so great a majority of the young men who are trained under those influences so nearly useless in the Church of God. Will this be called censoriousness? It is the solemn truth. I say it with pain and agony; but say it I must, and say it I would, if I knew it would cost me my life. Why, beloved brethren, unless there is more conscience in the Christian ministry--a broader, deeper, more efficient,

and practical knowledge of the claims of the law of God--a deeper, quicker, more agonizing insight into the depths of iniquity of the human heart--a greater abhorrence of every form of sin--a more insupportable agony in view of its existence in every form and in every degree--the world and the Church too, will sink down to hell, under our administration. I appeal to you, my brethren, who are already in the ministry; I appeal to your churches; I appeal to the lookers on; I appeal to angels and to God, and inquire, how many forms of sin are allowed to exist in you, and in your churches, without any thing like that pointed rebuke which the nature of the case demands? Why, my brethren, do not many of you satisfy yourselves simply with preaching against sin, while you are afraid so much as to name the different forms of sin that exist among those to whom you are preaching? Do you not preach against sin in the abstract, with very little or no descending to particulars? Do you arraign selfishness in all the various forms that it exists among your people? Do you rebuke their pride, self-indulgence, vanity, luxury, speculations, party spirit; and, indeed, my brethren, do you name and bring the law and gospel of God fully to bear upon the various forms of iniquity, in the detail, that exist among your people? Or are the consciences of some of you so seared, as to render you almost blind to any thing like the details of sin as they exist around you? Said a discerning man in my hearing, not long since, Our minister preaches against sin; but he does not tell what sin is. He preaches against sin in general; but never against any particular sin. He denounces it in the aggregate; but never meddles with it in the detail, as it exists among his people. I do not give the words, but the substance of his remarks. Now, my beloved brethren, of how many of us could such a testimony as this be borne with truth? And how many such ministers, think you, would it require to convert the world? Of what use is it, I pray you, to preach against sin, or in favor of holiness, in the abstract, without so far entering into the detail as to possess our people of the true idea of what sin and holiness are?

20. You see the importance of praying continually for a quick, and tender, and powerful conscience.

21. You see the importance of great watchfulness, lest we should abuse and seduce our conscience, by indulgence in sin.

22. You see the great importance of faithful dealing with the consciences of all around us, so as to keep our own and their consciences fully awake, and as quick and sensitive as the apple of the eye.

23. You see the importance of self-examination, in regard to the real state of our consciences, whether they are fully awake to the whole circle of moral duties and obligations, or whether they are asleep and seared, on a great many questions that come within the cognizance of the law of God.

24. You see one grand design of preaching the gospel. It is to develop and quicken conscience, until it gains the ascendancy in the mind, and exercises that influence over the will that belongs to it.

25. You see why converts backslide, so soon after a revival of religion. It is because so little pains are taken, to quicken, develop, and keep their consciences awake on every subject. If they are allowed to practice any iniquity; if they are not urged up continually to a full and complete renunciation of every form of sin; if they are not urged to aim at holiness, and expect to get away from all sin, they will assuredly indulge in various forms of sin. Their consciences will become more and more seared, until they can shamelessly backslide and disgrace the cause of Christ.

26. You can see what infinite evil has resulted to the Church, and is still resulting, from the denial that men are expected to live without sin in this life. Why, this denial is to my mind one of the most death-dealing errors that can be held up before the eyes of sinners. What! are men to be generally taught that they are not to expect, and even that it is a dangerous heresy to expect to live, even for a single day, without going into rebellion against Almighty God? Are they thus to be taught to expect to sin? Who does not see, that this must result in their indulging in sin, with very little remorse or self-abhorrence?

27. You see how the doctrine of sanctification in this life appears to one who has a quick and sensitive conscience. Only let a man's conscience become so thoroughly awake as that the thought of sinning is to him as terrible as death, so that conscience will roll a wave of unutterable pain across his mind, and weigh him down with agony, at every step he takes in sin--let his conscience be in such a state as to agonize his soul to a degree that will cause the perspiration to pour out from his body almost in streams, as is sometimes the case, and then present to that soul the offer of a full salvation. Tell him, if he will confess his sins, "Christ is faithful and just to forgive his sins, and cleanse him from all unrighteousness"--announce to him the fact, that the gospel has provided a salvation from sin in this life, and he will perhaps answer you at first, "This is too good news to be true--O that it were true!" But turn the subject over, and present the scripture promises, and with what eagerness he will grasp at them. O, he will cry out, "this is indeed a gospel suited to the circumstances and character of man. This is a salvation worthy of the Son of God."

28. You see how this doctrine can be doubted by the church without absolute horror. Why, beloved, suppose a man's conscience thoroughly awake, until sin should appear to him in a great measure as it does to the inhabitants of heaven. Then announce to that soul that he must expect to live in sin as long as life lasts--he must expect to sin against God every day till he dies. Why, methinks, he would shriek, and scream, and faint, and die with agony. "O horrible," he would exclaim, "with such a conscience as this, inflicting on me the pangs of the second death every time I sin, must I continue to sin as long as I live? Is there no hope that I shall escape? Has the gospel made no provision for my entire sanctification in this life? Then woe is me! I am undone. And if it is heresy to believe I shall escape from my sin before I die, O that death would come upon me this moment." This has been the actual feeling of many whose consciences have become thoroughly awake, and who were taught that there was no such provision in the gospel as that they might reasonably expect a present deliverance from all sin. Indeed, the denial of the attainability of a state of entire sanctification in this life, to an individual whose conscience is thoroughly quickened and full of power, would agonize him like the thrusting a poisoned dagger to his heart. It seems to me that within the last two or three years, I have sometimes felt as if I could not live if I did not believe the doctrine of a full salvation from sin in this life.

29. We see what the spiritual state of those must be who manifest an unwillingness to have this doctrine true. There are those who manifest the greatest want of candor in weighing the evidences in its favor, and seem disposed to resort to any shift to disprove it. It were easy to show that their writings and their sayings have every mark of an utter unwillingness to have this doctrine true. Now I ask what must their spiritual state be? What is the state of their conscience? How much do they sympathize with the inhabitants of heaven in regard to the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Do they feel horror-stricken at the idea of sinning against God? Do they know what it is to have the perspiration flow like rain when they fall into the slightest sin? Are they crying out in their prayers for a

deliverance? No, but they are denouncing those that do, and who are reaching after and expecting a full salvation, as heretics and fanatics, and as explaining away the law of God!

30. You see that until the conscience of the church is quickened, but little can be done for the salvation of the world. See that tobacco-chewing minister, see that whiskey or cider drinking deacon. Why, how many forms of luxury and self-indulgence are allowed in the Church without any conscience, while the world is going down to hell. Even agents of tract, missionary and other societies for the spread of the gospel, will go through the country, smoking and chewing tobacco, drinking tea and coffee, and thus by their example encouraging the Church in the use of these pernicious articles, and in spending more, and perhaps ten times as much, every year for these pernicious luxuries, as they give for the spread of the blessed gospel.

31. It is amazing that tobacco-chewing ministers can (as they have in some instances, as I have been informed,) find fault with others for letting down the claims of the law. They seem at the same breath to find fault with others, for insisting upon physiological and dietetic reform, and indeed, for pressing the subject of reform so extensively as they do, and yet complain that their teaching is letting down the claims of the law of God. One of the eastern papers, but a few months since, in reviewing one of my sermons, protested in the most earnest manner against my extending the claims of the law too far. The writer said the law of God was itself strict enough, and that he must protest against its being extended beyond its real meaning. My beloved brethren, what consistency is there in maintaining at the same time two such opposite sentiments as are often maintained upon this subject? But let me say again that until the conscience of the ministry and of the church of God is thoroughly quickened upon the subject of universal reformation, the world can never be converted.

How is it possible that ministers can waste God's money, set such an example to the church, and abuse their own bodies and souls by the habitual use of tobacco, one of the most hurtful and disgusting practices that ever disgraced mankind, without compunction of conscience, and yet complain of any body's letting down the claims of the law of God, and even go so far as to write pastoral letters against the heresy of letting down the law of God, while they have no conscience on the subject of such practices. How can men be so engaged to defend the purity, the strictness, and the honor of the law of God while in the very face of their churches and in the face of heaven, they can indulge in such things as these. I would say this, with the utmost kindness and yet faithfulness to them and to God, to the church, and to my own soul. I must say it though with unutterable grief.

32. It is strange that so many churches who are living in the habitual indulgence of so many forms of sin, can manifest so much alarm at the idea of letting down the claims of the law of God. They hardly seem to have ever thought of practicing any self-denial, keeping their bodies under, crucifying and mortifying the flesh. Almost innumerable forms of sin are allowed to exist among them without their blushing or being at all ashamed of them. And yet they manifest a great degree of alarm lest the claims of the law should be let down, and some forms of sin allowed to escape detection, and pass without rebuke. There are many things in the present day that strongly remind one of the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees, whose fears were greatly excited on the subject of our Lord Jesus Christ's letting down the law of God. They accused him of violating the Sabbath, having a wicked spirit, and of even being possessed of the devil, and seemed to be horrified with his loose notions of the claims of the law of God. They were exceedingly zealous, and cried out with great vehemence and bitterness

against his want of principle and firm adherence to the law of God. I would not on any account make any such allusions as this, or say one word unnecessarily to wound the feelings of any one. But it seems to be important at the present time to call the attention of the church to the great inconsistency of exclaiming against this letting down the law of God, while they are indulging with so little remorse in great multitudes of most manifest and even flagrant violations of the law. And while we contend for universal reformation, and obedience to the law of God, they are opposing us on the one hand for our strictness, and on the other for our looseness. Nor can they contend that our strictness extends only to some subjects of minor importance, for we do insist upon universal obedience to the law of God, in heart and life.

33. It is impossible for me to understand how persons should really be in love with the law of God, earnestly and honestly engaged in supporting it in all the length and breadth of its claims, and yet indulge in so many forms of violating it with so little compunction. Is there not, my beloved brethren, some delusion in the thing? Can any man be deeply and thoroughly honest in defending the purity and strictness of that law that says--"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," who can hold slaves, use or vend alcohol as an article of common use, and encourage the church in using tobacco and other worse than useless narcotics and filthy things, to the great injury of their health, and to the robbing of the treasury of the Lord?

34. You see the mistake of supposing that conscience will always admonish us when we do wrong. When it has become seared on any point we may continue in that form of iniquity without experiencing the rebuke of conscience.

35. We see the danger of this belief. If you take it for granted that you are not sinning, because you are not rebuked by your conscience, you will probably sleep on until you are in the depths of hell.

36. There is no safety in stopping short of universal reformation in heart and life.

37. A generally seared conscience is a fearful evidence of a state of hopeless reprobation.

38. A mind with a seared conscience is like a tub without a bottom. Truth flows right through it, and there is no such thing as influencing the will by truth. You may as well expect to influence a mere brute by moral considerations as a man whose conscience is asleep, or seared.

39. You see why so many can ridicule many important branches of reform, and even scoff at them.

40. You see why many persons cry out upon many branches of reform as legal, as self-righteousness, as something which overlooks the gospel. Here it is of the utmost importance to remember, that to do any thing from a mere constrained compliance with the demands of conscience without a love to what is right for its own sake, is by no means obedience to the law of God. Conscience enforces moral obligation and love complies with it. Conscience decrees oughtness, or that you ought to do thus and thus, and benevolence walks up, joyfully and instantly, to meet the imposed responsibility. It should never be forgotten or overlooked that love is the substance of all obedience to the law of God, and that whenever the dictates of conscience are outwardly complied with for other than disinterestedly benevolent reasons, this is in reality regarding neither the demand of conscience nor of God; for

conscience demands that right shall be done, and done from love to God and love to right. Whatever is not of love is not obedience to God. But again I must say, that love or benevolence, without a most strict regard to the injunctions of conscience, is a downright absurdity. Benevolence, without universal obedience, is absurd. If there is love, there will be a most punctilious wakefulness to every affirmation of conscience. And I do not hesitate to say, that he who can call this a legal, instead of a gospel righteousness, is an Antinomian. He is guilty of a fundamental and soul-destroying error.

41. Conscience will not always remain silent. A man may in this life pervert and silence his conscience, and even destroy his moral agency, by making himself a lunatic. But let it be understood, that the time is coming when God will secure the fixed attention of the mind to those great moral truths that will arouse and arm the conscience with a thousand scorpions. When it awakes in eternity, its rebukes will be terrible beyond all description and imagination. How often it awakes even here towards the close of life, and inflicts the sharpest and most unutterable pangs upon subjects where it has long been silent. Cases have occurred under my own observation in which conscience has been so quickened upon some subjects, on which it had been nearly entirely silent, as to pierce the soul with such agonies as were almost entirely insupportable. Instances have occurred where persons have fallen like dead men, under the rebukes of conscience. In some cases men who have been the most hardened, whose consciences have been for years seared with a hot iron, have been made to wail out, even in this life, like a soul in the prison of despair. O, sinner, O, professor of religion, do not suppose that you can always, through time and eternity, stupefy and benumb your conscience, and drown the clamors of your outraged moral nature. It will, by and by, speak out with terror and in a voice of thunder. It will sit and gnaw upon your soul, and prove itself to be "the worm that never dies." It will transfix your soul as with the arrow of eternal death.

## **Conditions of Being Kept**

Lecture XXXIII

May 26, 1841

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Text.--1 Peter 4:19: "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

In this discussion I design to show:

*I. In what sense the trials, temptations, and sufferings of the saints, in this life, are according to the will of God.*

*II. What is intended by committing the soul to Him.*

*III. What is intended by committing the soul to Him in well doing.*

*IV. If the soul be thus committed to Him, it will inevitably be kept.*

*V. Notice several mistakes into which many fall, upon this subject.*

**I. In what sense the trials, temptations, and sufferings of the saints, in this life, are according to the will of God.**

- 1. Not in the sense that God has any pleasure in them for their own sake. God does not regard pain or suffering of any kind as a good in itself. He never takes pleasure in the sufferings of any being on their own account.
- 2. The trials and sufferings of the saints are not to be regarded as according to the will of God, in such a sense that He does not sympathize with the saints in their sufferings; for He really does, with all the kindness of parental feeling.
- 3. Nor are they to be regarded as according to the will of God, in such a sense, that He does not regard them as evils in themselves; for they doubtless are looked upon by Him as serious evils in themselves.
- 4. Nor in such a sense, that He does not feel afflicted with their afflictions, as perfectly good parents would feel in view of the afflictions of their children, were all the results of these afflictions present with them as they are with God.
- 5. Nor in the sense, that He, in all cases, approves the means by which they are afflicted; for He often feels utterly opposed to the means by which his people are afflicted.
- 6. Nor are these sufferings according to his will in such a sense, that He would not prevent them, if He wisely could. But--
- 7. They are according to his will in the sense, that under the circumstances, He regards them as the less of two evils. They are evils in themselves; but are regarded by God as a less evil than would result from his interfering to prevent them.
- 8. They are according to his will in the sense, that He often sees them to be indispensable to the highest good of the saints themselves. The moral tendency of these afflictions is such, as oftentimes to teach his people lessons which in no other way they will learn; and, consequently, are often an indispensable condition of their sanctification and salvation.
- 9. They are, therefore, regarded by Him as upon the whole, most for his glory, and the highest good of the universe. No thanks to those who are the guilty instruments of afflicting the saints; for they do not mean to glorify God. They are earthly, wicked, and selfish in their intentions; but God often overrules and calls in the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath



He will restrain.

- 10. They are according to his will in the sense, that upon the whole, under all the circumstances of the case, He prefers they should take place. That is, He prefers it as the less of two evils, and considers it a less evil, under all the circumstances, than for Him to interpose by his omnipotence and prevent it.
- 11. He views these afflictions, temptations, trials, &c., as that in which, with the results, all present to Him, He rejoices. Or strictly, it should be said--that in the results He rejoices, and not in the means, on their own account, but only as the necessary means of effecting his benevolent ends.

## **II. What is intended by committing the soul to God.**

- 1. The word rendered commit, in this text, is a form of the same word that is often rendered faith in the New Testament; and in this connection conveys a very correct idea of the real meaning of the term faith, or of the true nature of faith. It means, to trust, confide. It is not a mere emotion of the mind--but is an act of the will; a yielding up, or giving over the soul to God, for safe keeping. It is like the committing a treasure to any one, to be kept for us.
- 2. It is like a bride committing herself to her husband, a giving herself away, committing her honor, her all, into his hands, and thus uniting her destiny with his.
- 3. It is a state, or an abiding trust or confidence, in opposition to a single act of will. It is such a state as keeps the soul at rest or in peace.

## **III. What is intended by committing the soul to God in WELL DOING.**

- 1. It is the delivering up of the whole being to doing and suffering the whole will of God, joyfully and calmly; leaving results with Him. Observe, the will controls the actions of body and mind. This committing the soul to Him in well doing, is that act of the will by which all the powers of body and mind, so far as they are under the control of the will, are delivered up or consecrated to the service of God, delivered up to do his whole will; calmly and unhesitatingly leaving results entirely with Him.

As an illustration of what is intended, take the case of Abraham, when he was commanded by God to forsake his country and his kindred, for a land that God would show him. Without stopping to be informed as it respected the land, how far off, where it was, or what sort of a country it should be, he instantly obeyed, and went forth at the bidding of God, not knowing whither he went; taking it for granted, as a thing settled beyond all question, that God would guide him aright. He obeyed implicitly, and thus committed his soul to God in well doing; that is, in implicit obedience. So in the case of his being commanded to offer up Isaac, his son of promise, "his only son Isaac, whom he loved." What a wonderful trial of his faith! That this son of promise, of whom it had been said he should be the father of many nations, should be destined to be slain by his own father's hand, previous to his being a father at all, was placing Abraham under

circumstances immensely interesting and trying. But behold his confidence; how he committed every thing to God in implicit obedience. He went forth, prepared to render unqualified obedience to God--trusting that if he was slain God was able to raise him again from the dead; from whence also he virtually received him; or as God expresses it, "received him in a figure."

- 2. It is confidence reposed in God, upon his own conditions. God has informed mankind, that they may trust in Him for safe-keeping, upon conditions of implicit obedience, and not otherwise. He does not allow people to repose confidence in Him, that He will keep and save them, if they disobey Him. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?" It is, then, upon his own conditions that the soul is to be committed to Him, and this is the thing the Apostle requires in the text.
- 3. It is giving yourself up to the promotion of his glory and the good of the universe, with the steadfast confidence, that your soul and interests in his hands are safe.
- 4. It is thus giving yourself up in implicit obedience, with the fullest assurance, that you need not concern yourself about results.
- 5. It is thus giving yourself up, with the entire willingness that the results shall be in all respects according to the will of God.
- 6. It is the actual going right forward in the discharge of every duty, in the exercise of such confidence in God, in respect to results, as to feel no anxiety or carefulness as respects the disposition God will make of your soul.

#### **IV. If the soul be thus committed to God, it will inevitably be kept.**

- 1. It will be kept, because God is a faithful God. He is described in the text as a faithful Creator. There is no reason to distrust Him. He will not, cannot abuse your confidence. He is not only faithful, but infinitely faithful, and will heartily and certainly fulfill all his pledges, and keep that which you commit to Him in well doing.
- 2. He is able to keep your soul. He is described in the text as the Creator of the soul. If He was able to make it, He is certainly able to keep it.
- 3. He is willing; certainly, He is infinitely willing to keep it, or He would not have given his Son to die to redeem it. He would not take so much pains to get possession of it. He would not use so many means, with such long-suffering, and exercise such great self-denial as to give the life of his well beloved Son, to redeem the soul from the hands of public justice, and to persuade man to commit his soul to Him, unless He was willing with all his heart to keep it, when committed to Him upon his own conditions.
- 4. His honor demands that He should keep the soul when thus committed to Him in well doing. Moral beings, from the very constitution of their natures, regard a breach of sacred confidence, or trust, as a most dishonorable and hateful offense, as deserving the severest reprobation. What

an infinite dishonor it would be to God, to suffer a soul to be lost which was committed to Him upon his own conditions for safe keeping.

- 5. He regards every soul thus committed to Him as He does the apple of his eye. He says, he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.
- 6. God regards the soul as worth keeping. He has given an intimation of the light in which He regards the value of the soul, in the Atonement of Christ. O who should know the value of the soul but God, who made it? Who knows what eternity is but God? Who can form an idea of what an immortal soul can suffer or enjoy, but God? Whose eye has beheld, whose heart has pondered, and whose mind has compassed the capabilities of the soul to endure or to enjoy, but God? And shall not God keep a soul--a deathless soul--a soul made in his own image--a soul for whom his Son has died--shall He not keep it when committed to Him upon his own conditions? Shall He carelessly throw it away? Shall He neglect it, and suffer any to pluck it out of his hands? O tell it not in Gath. It cannot be.
- 7. If thus committed to Him God will keep it, because He knows you will not keep it yourself; but that if it be left with you, it will be lost forever. Nay, He sees that you have lost it already; that you have sold it into perpetual slavery--that it is already bound over, and sentenced to eternal death--that unless it is committed to Him, it must inevitably lie down in everlasting sorrow. How infinitely important, then, that the soul should be instantly committed to Him in well doing.

#### **V. Mistakes into which many fall, upon this subject.**

- 1. Many have an Antinomian faith. They trust that God will keep and save their souls, and yet they have not complied, and do not comply with the only conditions upon which they are at liberty to trust in God. Instead of committing their souls to Him in well doing--instead of implicitly obeying God, they think that Christ's righteousness will answer for Himself and them too; so that they shall be saved on account of Christ's obedience, whether they render a personal obedience or not. This is a horrible delusion. An imputed righteousness in this sense, is one of the grossest blunders, and most shocking errors, the world has ever fallen into.
- 2. Others are not expecting to be saved without good works, but are taking a passive attitude, and waiting for God, in some mysterious way, to move upon them and influence them to obey Him. Thus, instead of going forward actually to the exercise of their own agency, they are, as they suppose, trusting in God while professedly waiting for divine influence. Is this committing the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing?
- 3. Others engage in what they call well doing from mere considerations of duty, without any of that faith that works by love. They have in reality, no faith in Christ. They do not commit the keeping of their souls to him in affectionate confidence, but go about what they call the discharge of duty, impelled by other considerations than those of faith and love. They have no rest, no deep peace of mind in what they call their well-doing. Now, this shows, that they are mere legalists, and know not what that faith is, which is spoken of in this text.

- 4. Many mistake emotions of assurance that they shall be kept, for faith. An emotion of assurance is wholly an involuntary state of mind. It is by no means to be confounded with faith. Faith is an act of the will, as I have already said, and because it is an act of the will, it is connected with its outward manifestations by a natural necessity. It is impossible that real faith should not produce corresponding outward conduct, as impossible as it is that our bodies should not be influenced by our wills. There may often be high wrought emotions of assurance, without any real faith, and yet nothing is more common, than for persons to confound these two states of mind, and mistake the one for the other, but they are entirely different states of mind. Faith, as I have already said, is an act or choice of the will, a committing or giving up the soul to God in implicit obedience. Every thing therefore, which is called faith, that does not, as a matter of fact, manifest itself in obedience to God, is not the faith of the gospel. It is a mere antinomian faith. It is an emotion and not an act of the will at all.
- 5. Others mistake a single act of faith for that state of faith which habitually trusts or commits the keeping of the soul to Him in well doing, all the time. Now there is certainly a difference between a first or single act of faith, and a state of confidence. Let the case of a wife illustrate what I mean. Suppose a woman, under circumstances of excitement and being pressed hard by the persuasion of her friends, to consent to become a wife, and by one act to commit herself to the honor, protection, and guidance, of her husband. But, suppose that she should soon fall back, and lose her confidence in him, become distrustful insomuch that she could not trust him out of her sight without fearing he was in company with some other woman or engaged in what he ought not to be, keeping herself in continual trouble, lest he should be guilty of some act of infidelity to her, or be unable or unwilling to support her, and thus she should become full of tossings night and day. But suppose, on the other hand, that she had so fully committed herself as that she could honestly say, from that time forward, that never, for one moment she had distrusted her husband in any respect, or in the least degree, whether at home or abroad. In whatever company, and in whatever circumstances, she had had the most implicit and unshaken confidence in him, insomuch that her soul had been as entirely at rest in respect to him as if she had known it was naturally impossible for him to do wrong, or betray her confidence. Now, it should be remembered that this committing the soul to Him in well doing must not merely be a single act, but a continuous act or state of the will. Unless it be a continued state that holds out to the end, God has not promised to keep the soul.
- 6. Others again, are attempting to get faith by works. Instead of at once confiding in God, by a simple act of committing all to Him, they go to work, and by laborious efforts, try to force themselves into the exercise of those emotions of assurance which they suppose to constitute faith.
- 7. Others are speculating about the philosophy of faith to the neglect of the objects of faith. They give up the attention of the mind to a dissecting of their mental exercises, and to the settling of certain philosophical questions, instead of pouring the intense energies of their mind upon those truths that are to be believed. Instead of looking at Christ and attentively considering the truths of his precious gospel, they are turning their attention within themselves, and looking into the darkness of their own minds, for light upon the subject of faith. This is about as wise as if a man should shut up his eyes in the midst of noon-day, and turn in upon an examination of

the anatomy and physiology of the eye, with the philosophy of vision, seeking for light.

- 8. Others still are trying to live by faith without works. They forget that a faith without works is dead, or that it is a mere emotion and not an act of the will, and therefore has no virtue in it. "Show me your faith," says James, "without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works--wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead."

It should always be remembered that faith works. It is an active principle. It is itself an action, an effort of the will, and of course exhibits itself in works. Some, indeed, are endeavoring to live by faith without works, and others by works without faith. And O, how rare a thing is it to find those who have the faith that works by love.

## REMARKS.

1. It cannot be too distinctly understood and borne in mind, that all the Christian graces, properly so called, are acts of will, and connected with their outward manifestations, in a corresponding course of action, by a natural necessity. As I have already said, faith is an act of the will and connected with corresponding works, and works of love, by a natural necessity. Therefore no other faith than that which works, and works by love, is evangelical or saving faith. It is a trusting or committing the soul to Christ in well doing. How infinitely important is it that this be borne in mind.

2. What numerous blunders have been made by theological writers on the subject of faith. Some holding it to be a passive state of mind, thus confounding it with the perception of truth--others have confounded it with emotion, or a full assurance that the gospel or the promises are true--others still have made it voluntary only indirectly and have supposed it to have moral character only because it is indirectly produced by an act of the will, in directing the attention to the examination of the evidence. It seems to have been quite extensively understood to be synonymous with conviction of persuasion of mind that a thing is true. These and similar blunders upon this subject, have led so many Antinomians and heartless professors of religion to settle down upon the supposition that they are Christians, taking it for granted that they can have true faith, true love, and true repentance, and yet that these graces may exist without manifesting themselves in benevolent outward conduct. How infinitely important it is then to understand that repentance, faith, love, are all acts of the will, of choices; and must of necessity manifest themselves in a corresponding outward conduct. The love that constitutes religion is good willing, or benevolence, and not complacency in God or any other being. We are as entirely involuntary in the exercise of the love of complacency toward God, as we are in the exercise of complacency in any other object, that is to us naturally beautiful and lovely. So repentance is an act of the will, and does not consist at all in those emotions of sorrow that are often supposed to be repentance. Repentance, when properly considered, and resolved into its proper elements, is precisely synonymous with regeneration or a change from selfishness to benevolence. Sorrow for sin is a mere consequence, connected with repentance by a natural necessity just as complacency in God is with benevolence and faith. Whoever overlooks, therefore, in his own experience, or in his account or estimation of his character, the fact that all the Christian graces, properly so called, or all that in which there is true virtue, consist in acts of will, which must of course and of necessity manifest themselves in corresponding outward acts, will totally deceive himself.

3. As it is true that no faith is evangelical except that which works by love, so also it is true, that no

works are acceptable but works of faith. Any works not connected with and originating in faith, or any committing of the soul to God in well doing, are only works of law, by which no flesh can be justified.

4. This text is a beautiful description of true religion. It is admirably guarded and beautifully expressed. It sums up the whole of it in the short sentence--"commit the soul to Him in well doing."

5. This is the very direction, amplified, explained and illustrated, that answers the important question, "what shall I do to be saved?"

6. This text says nothing about waiting for mere feeling or emotion. It requires at once an act of will which is directly within our power. If there is any thing in the universe over which a man has control, it is over his own volitions. It is absurd and contradictory to say he cannot will. The thing then to be done--the thing required in the text, is at once to put forth the act of committing the soul to God in well doing.

7. All faith and trust in God that does not work, and work by love, is tempting God. It is trusting Him without complying with his express conditions. It is presumption, and a blasphemous abuse of God. It is the greatest dishonor to God, and that which He supremely resents and abhors, that any one should claim or pretend to trust in Him, without habitually obeying Him.

8. So all works without faith are tempting God; for they are setting aside his conditions, and a wicked attempt to be justified directly or indirectly by works of law, which he has declared to be impossible.

9. The afflictions, temptations and trials of the saints are designed and calculated to strengthen their faith. When they have passed through those scenes and have had much experience of the faithfulness of God, they can speak from experience. The faithfulness of God with them is not a matter of theory, but of certain knowledge.

10. The sharper the trial, the greater the triumph, and the deeper the rest of the soul, when it is over. This is the natural result of learning by experience the great faithfulness of God.

11. But "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

12. God sometimes suffers persons to fall into sin, because they are presumptuous in running into temptation. They pray "Lead us not into temptation," and then rush right into it. And because they do not watch, God suffers them to fall. Nay, He cannot by any possibility prevent their falling, unless they will watch.

13. It is impossible that a faith that does not work, and work by love, should be a saving faith. In other words it is impossible for God to save the soul through the medium of faith that is not holy, or does not consist in an act of will and connected with a corresponding course of life by a natural necessity. If the Christian graces were mere emotions instead of choices they might exist forever without any virtue or holiness in the mind. If faith were a mere antinomian perception of the truths of the gospel, a

mere emotion or felt assurance of being kept or saved which Antinomians have, there would be no tendency to salvation in it, nor would there be any possibility that salvation should be connected with it. All virtue consists in intention or acts of will. And a faith that is not an act of will is a dead faith, a faith connected with damnation and not with salvation.

14. It should always be remembered that whenever you are living in the neglect of duty or in any form of disobedience, your faith is vain, i.e. it is no faith, it is a mere emotion and not an act of will, for if it were an act of will it would be connected with a discharge of all known duty by an act of necessity.

15. One grand reason of keeping the saints for a time in this world is to develop and strengthen their graces, to confirm them in holiness. Holiness is always pure in kind. It is always obedience to God. It may intermit and acquire permanence by the teaching and discipline that confirms and perpetuates faith and all those states of mind and acts of will, of which faith is the condition.

16. In this state of existence the saints are educated for future usefulness. It may be and probably is true, that the saints will hereafter be employed in works of love, under circumstances that will require just that degree of knowledge and strength of virtue which they acquire in passing through the scenes of tumult with which they are surrounded in this life. They are here made familiar with temptation and with the faithfulness of God. And they will doubtless hereafter need this experience, in order that they may act well their part in the labors to which God shall hereafter call them. We may rest assured that our discipline here is not in vain, and that God would not leave his children to pass through such scenes if it could be wisely avoided.

17. The sufferings of the saints in this life are eminently calculated to prepare them for the enjoyments of heaven.

18. It is a great evil and a great sin to cast away your confidence in an hour of trial. You have heard of the patience and confidence of Job. Satan accused him, before the sons of God, of having a selfish religion: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land; but put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them; and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword: and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burnt up the sheep, and the servants, and hath consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Then Job arose and rent his mantle,

and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

Now see the great confidence of this man of God. In an hour of trial and temptation he did not, like many professors of religion now, cast away his shield. But his trial is not yet ended: "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life; but put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die! But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

How affecting and remarkable it is, that Job's confidence should have been so unwavering under such trials as these. One messenger comes upon the heels of another--and while one is yet speaking another comes, and another, and another, and another--bringing intelligence still more afflicting and overwhelming. He was very rich; but one thing goes after another, till he is left a beggar. Still his children are left to him; but while the intelligence of the destruction of the last remains of his fortune is still in his ears, a messenger comes to inform him of the instantaneous death of all his children. He then stands naked before the Lord, and cries out, "Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I go out of it. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But still his wife is left--his dearest earthly friend, his richest earthly treasure, is still left. She is not only alive, but she has not forsaken him. Her countenance, her support, and her counsel, are still with him. But ah! when Satan but touches his person, then she forsakes him. His three friends come to taunt him. He is accused of being a hypocrite, and his wife, confident of his sincerity, and thinking him abused, advises him to curse God and die. But hear the man of God: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "Although He slay me," says he, "yet will I trust in Him."

Now how infinitely unlike many professors of religion, in the present day, was this conduct of Job. Many professors seem to be like soldiers, who carry their shield when there is no danger; but as soon as they come into danger, where they have occasion to use it, they cast it away and flee; give up their confidence in God, "which hath great recompense of reward," and turn their backs upon God, and shamefully apostatize.

Suppose a man were going to sea, and God should inform him that he would encounter great storms,



and go through much tribulation; yet, nevertheless, he should ride them all out in safety, and "not a hair of any man's head should perish." With this promise in his hand, he embarks and sets his feet upon the deck of the ship, and feels that he is as safe as if upon eternal rock. But he is scarcely out of sight of land before a tempest arises. The heavens gather blackness, the blazing lightnings flash around him, and now he is lifted upon the mountain wave, and anon the ocean yawns as if it would lay bare its very bottom, to receive the plunging and struggling bark. The tempest roars so loud, that the voice of the thunder cannot be heard. The captain, with his trumpet, is obliged to shout at the top of his voice, in every man's ear, to be heard and understood. The elements are conspired against him. The rattling hail, the forked lightning, the deafening roar of the tempest, the mighty wrestlings of the waves, all exhibit around him a scene of terror and consternation, indescribable; but God rides upon the storm, and amid the mighty rollings of the ship, when the daring seamen from the highest yards are rolled and pitched as if to be thrown to a great distance, by the mighty sweepings of the sea; why, if his faith is firm in God, the man can stand upon the deck, and in every rolling and lurching of the ship cry out, "Hold on, for God has spoken, and not a hair of any man's head shall perish. I believe in God. Let the winds blow on, and let the elements conspire against this trembling ship; though every joint shall groan, and every butt should seem about to spring--though sea after sea should make an entire breach over us, from stem to stern; yet, as God is true, the hair of no man's head shall perish." Why, with the promise of God in his hand, he could ride the world around in the midst of the most terrific hurricane, and be as calm as if sitting by his fire at home.

But suppose that, with such a promise as this in his hand, and with the express intimation that he must pass through great storms, and great tribulations, to enter the haven of rest, the man had so little confidence in God, that unless it was fair weather all the time, he was in a state of continual distrust. Every appearance of a storm would make him tremble. He would cast away his confidence, and before the whole ship's crew he would dishonor God, and give up all for lost. O, the shipmen and the passengers would say, what sort of a Christian is this, and what must he think of his God, to have no confidence in the stability of his promise? He must see with his eyes, that there is no danger, or he is in a state of continual distress. O the miserable unbelief, the God dishonoring distrust and casting away of confidence with which the Church of God is cursed. How greatly this grieves the Spirit of the Lord, and how greatly it offends against the generation of God's children. What a stumbling block to the saints, and what ruin it brings upon the world.

Beloved, when you are called to pass through trials, and deep waters of affliction, these are your golden opportunities to honor the blessed God, and exhibit the value and power of your religion. These are the bright spots in your history, in which you have an opportunity to make the deepest impression upon the world. Why, have you never known, that "the blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church?"--that their confidence in God, in the midst of the fires of martyrdom, were to the bystanders the overwhelming demonstration of the truth and value of their religion? What, then, do you mean, to cast away your confidence in an hour of trial? Why do you not hold on? Why do you not, then, when you have the opportunity, show yourself a good soldier of Jesus Christ?

1. "I am a soldier of the cross,

A foll'wer of the Lamb;

And shall I fear to own his cause,

Or blush to speak his name?

2. Shall I be carried to the skies,  
on flow'ry beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sail'd through bloody seas?

3. Are there no foes for me to face,  
Must I not stem the flood;  
Is this vain world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?

4. Sure I must fight, if I would reign;  
Increase my courage, Lord,  
To bear the cross, endure the shame,  
Supported by thy word.

5. The saints, in all this glorious war,  
Shall conquer, tho' they die;  
They see the triumph from afar,  
With faith's discerning eye."

--Watts

# National Fast Day

Lecture XXXIV

June 9, 1841

PREACHED ON THE DAY OF THE NATIONAL FAST, MAY 14

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Isaiah 58:1 "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins," &c. &c.

My design is not to enter into a critical exposition of this chapter, but merely to make it the basis of some remarks upon private and public FASTING. In doing this I shall show:

*I. What is implied in an acceptable fast.*

*II. The importance of abstinence from food on such occasions.*

*III. That human governments are a divine institution.*

*IV. The principle upon which God deals with nations as such.*

*V. Notice the design, propriety, and use of national fasts.*

*VI. Point out the duty of citizens, and especially of Christians as citizens, in respect to them.*

*VII. Notice some of the national sins which call this nation to fasting, humiliation and prayer.*

## **I. What is implied in an acceptable fast.**

- 1. It implies repentance. Fasting without repentance must be an abomination.
- 2. It implies such a degree of sorrow and concern as to destroy, for the time being, the appetite for food. Every one is familiar with the fact, that when the mind is strongly exercised, and a high degree of emotion exists, it, for the time being, destroys the appetite. Children, arising in the morning to go a journey, are too much excited to eat. So when persons lose their friends, or any thing else occurs that produces a strong excitement of mind, they naturally reject their food. This fact is easily accounted for on physiological principles. When the mind is strongly exercised, there is a strong determination of blood to the head. When the appetite for food is excited, there is a determination of blood to the stomach. When, therefore, the mind is strongly exercised, there is a want of appetite for food of course; because, in ordinary circumstances, there is not that determination of blood to the stomach which produces a craving for food.

Therefore,

- 3. Acceptable fasting implies abstinence from food, for the time being.
- 4. It implies confession of sin to God, and to those who have been injured.
- 5. It implies restitution, so far as restitution is in your power.
- 6. It implies reformation.

## **II. Abstinence from food important.**

- 1. If the requisite state of mind exists, the health demands abstinence from food. When the brain is strongly exercised by the mind, if food be taken into the stomach, it will not, ordinarily, be digested; for the reason, that there is so much blood flowing to the brain as to deprive the stomach of that amount of excitement, and determination of blood to that organ, that is demanded for the purposes of digestion. In such cases food should not be taken, as it will seriously impair the health.
- 2. In such cases, food cannot be taken without serious detriment to the state of mind required. If the blood be diverted from the head to the stomach the strong exercise of the mind must necessarily, in a great measure, cease; but if the blood be not diverted from the head sufficient for digestion, the fermentation of food in the stomach, although it may not actually annihilate those exercises of the mind, must necessarily greatly impede them.
- 3. In such cases, abstinence greatly favors the healthy action of the mind, and leaves it free to pursue its investigations, and to exercise its affections, without being under the necessity of competing with the stomach, in its efforts to retain a sufficiency of blood for the brain. Who does not know, that when he has taken a full meal, he is disqualified, for a time, for close and vigorous thought? This is a physiological result. The stomach must have the excitement of a considerable determination of blood to that organ, or the process of digestion cannot go forward. And if, soon after eating a full meal, your mind be, by any means, lashed into a state of powerful excitement, you are nearly or quite sick in consequence.
- 4. Judicious fasting greatly aids the mind in gaining an ascendance over the bodily appetites and passions. This, also, is a physiological fact, easily explained. But into this I cannot here enter.

## **III. Human governments are a divine institution.**

I remark upon the divine authority of governments in this place, because of the manifest propriety of recognizing them, upon a celebration of a National Fast. You will indulge me in speaking more at length upon this head, as their divine authority has of late been questioned. And I will quote from my recently published *Skeletons on Theology*:

**FIRST.** Human governments are a necessity of human nature.

- 1. There is a material universe.
- 2. The bodies of men are material.
- 3. All action wastes these material bodies, and consequently they need continual sustenance.
- 4. Hence, we have many bodily wants.
- 5. Hence, the necessity of worldly goods and possessions.
- 6. There must be real estate.
- 7. It must belong to somebody.
- 8. There must, therefore, be all the forms of conveyancing, registry, and in short, all the forms of legal government. to settle and manage the real estate affairs of men.
- 9. Men have minds residing in a material body, and depending upon the organization and perfection of this body for mental development.
- 10. The mind receives its ideas of external objects, and the elements of all its knowledge through the bodily senses. It therefore needs books and other means of knowledge.
- 11. Hence, for this reason also men need property.
- 12. Moral beings will not agree in opinions on any subject, without similar degrees of knowledge.
- 13. Hence, no human community exists, or ever will exist, who on all subjects will agree in opinion.
- 14. This creates a necessity for human legislation and adjudication, to apply the great principle of moral law to all human affairs.
- 15. There are multitudes of human wants and necessities that cannot properly be met, except thro' the instrumentality of human governments.

**SECOND.** This necessity will continue as long as human beings exist in this world.

- 1. This is as certain as that the human body will always need sustenance, clothing, &c.
- 2. It is as certain as that the human soul will always need instruction, and that the means of instruction will not grow spontaneously, without expense or labor.
- 3. It is as certain as that men of all ages and circumstances will never possess equal degrees of information on all subjects.

- 4. If all men were perfectly holy and disposed to do right, the necessity of human governments would not be set aside, because this necessity is founded in the ignorance of mankind.
- 5. The decisions of legislators and judges must be authoritative, so as to settle questions of disagreement in opinion, bind, and protect all parties.
- 6. The Bible represents human governments not only as existing, but as giving their authority and power to the support of the Church in its most prosperous state, or in the Millenium. It proves that human government will not be dispensed with when the world is holy:
  - Isa. 49:22, 23: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their faces toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

**THIRD.** Human governments are plainly recognized in the Bible as a part of the moral government of God.

- 1. Dan. 2:21; "He changes the times and the seasons; He removeth kings and setteth up kings; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding."
  - Dan. 4:17, 25: "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." "They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Dan. 5: 21, Shows that this was done.
  - Rom. 13:1-7: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil. Wilt thou then not, be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."
  - Titus 3:1: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey

magistrates, to be ready to every good work."

- I Peter 2:13, 14: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

These passages prove conclusively, that God establishes human governments, as a part of his moral government.

- 2. It is a matter of fact, that God does exert moral influences through the instrumentality of human governments.
- 3. It is a matter of fact, that He often executes his law, punishes vice, and rewards virtue, through the instrumentality of human governments.
- 4. Under the Jewish Theocracy, where God was King, it was found indispensable to have the forms of the executive department of government.

**FOURTH.** Whose right and duty it is to govern.

- 1. I have said that government is a necessity. Human beings are, under God, dependent on human government to promote their highest well-being.
- 2. It is his right and duty to govern, who is both able and willing, in the highest and most effectual manner, to secure and promote individual and public virtue and happiness.
- 3. Upon him all eyes are or ought to be turned, as one whose right and whose duty it is, to sustain to them the relation of ruler.

**FIFTH.** In what cases human legislation imposes moral obligation.

- 1. Not when it requires what is inconsistent with moral law.
- 2. Not when it is arbitrary, or not founded in right reason. But -
- 3. It always imposes moral obligation when it is in accordance with moral law, or the law of nature.

**SIXTH.** It is the duty of all men to aid in the establishment and support of human governments.

- 1. Because human governments are founded in the necessities of human beings.
- 2. As all men are in some way dependent upon them, it is the duty of every man to aid in their establishment and support.
- 3. As the great law of benevolence, or universal good-willing, demands the existence of human

governments, all men are under a perpetual and unalterable moral obligation to aid in their establishment and support.

- 4. In popular or elective governments, every man having a right to vote, and every human being who has moral influence, is bound to exert that influence in the promotion of virtue and happiness. And as human governments are plainly indispensable to the highest good of man, he is bound to exert his influence to secure a legislation that is in accordance with the law of God.
- 5. The obligation of human beings to support and obey human governments, while they legislate upon the principles of the moral law, is as undeniable as the moral law itself.

**SEVENTH.** It is a ridiculous and absurd dream, to suppose that human governments can ever be dispensed with in the present world.

- 1. Because such a supposition is entirely inconsistent with the nature of human beings.
- 2. It is equally inconsistent with their relations and circumstances.
- 3. Because it assumes, that the necessity of government is founded alone in human depravity; whereas the foundation of this necessity is human ignorance, and human depravity is only an additional reason for the existence of human governments. The primary idea of law is to teach; hence, law has a precept. It is authoritative, and therefore has a penalty.
- 4. Because it assumes, that men would always agree in judgment, if their hearts were right, irrespective of their degrees of information.
- 5. Because it sets aside one of the plainest and most unequivocal doctrines of revelation.

- **Objection.** The Kingdom of God is represented in the Bible as subverting all other kingdoms.

- **Answer.** This is true, and all that can be meant by this is, that the time will come when God shall be regarded as the supreme and universal sovereign of the universe; when his law shall be regarded as universally obligatory; when all kings, legislators, and judges shall act as his servants, declaring, applying, and administering the great principle of his law to all the affairs of human beings. Thus God will be the Supreme Sovereign, and earthly rulers will be presidents, governors, kings, and judges, under Him, and acting by his authority, as revealed in the Bible.



- **Objection.** It is objected, that God only providentially establishes human governments, and that He does not approve of their selfish and wicked administration; that He only uses them providentially, as He does Satan, for the promotion of his own designs.



- **Answer 1.** God no where commands mankind to obey Satan; but does command them to obey magistrates and rulers.
  - Rom. 13:1: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."
  - 1 Pet. 2:13, 14: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."
- **Answer 2.** He no where recognizes Satan as his servant, sent and set by Him to administer justice and execute wrath upon the wicked; but He does this in respect to human governments.
  - Rom. 13:2-6: "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid: for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the MINISTER OF GOD, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."
- **Answer 3.** It is true indeed, that God approves of nothing that is ungodly and selfish in human governments. Neither did He approve of what was ungodly and selfish in the Scribes and Pharisees; and yet Christ said to his disciples, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses" seat. Therefore whatsoever things they command you, that observe and do; but go ye not after their works, for they say, and do not." Here the plain common sense principle is recognized, that we are to obey when the requirement is not inconsistent with the moral law, whatever may be the character or the motive of the ruler. We are always to obey heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men, and render obedience to magistrates for the honor and glory of God, and as doing service to Him.



- **Objection.** It is objected, that Christians should leave human governments to the management of the ungodly, and not be diverted from the work of saving souls, to intermeddle with human governments.
- **Answer 1.** This is not being diverted from the work of saving souls. The promotion of public and private order and happiness is one of the indispensable means of saving souls.
- **Answer 2.** It is nonsense to admit, that Christians are under an obligation to obey human government, and still have nothing to do with the choice of those who shall govern.



- **Objection.** It is objected, that we are commanded not to avenge ourselves, that "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord." It is said, that if I may not avenge or redress my own wrongs in my own person, I may not do it through the instrumentality of human government.
- **Answer 1.** It does not follow, that because you may not take it upon you to redress your own wrongs by a summary and personal infliction of punishment upon the transgressor, that human governments may not punish them.
- **Answer 2.** Because all private wrongs are a public injury; and irrespective of any particular regard to your personal interest, magistrates are bound to punish crime for the public good.
- **Answer 3.** It does not follow, because that while God has expressly forbidden you to redress your own wrongs by administering personal and private chastisement, He has expressly recognized the right and made it the duty of the public magistrate to punish crimes.



- **Objection.** It is objected, that love is so much better than law as that where love reigns in the heart, law can be universally dispensed with.
- **Answer 1.** This supposes, that if there is only love there need be no rule of duty.
- **Answer 2.** This objection overlooks the fact, that law is, in all worlds, the rule of duty, and that legal sanctions make up an indispensable part of that circle of motives that are suited to the nature, relations, and government of moral beings.
- **Answer 3.** The law requires love; and nothing is law, either human or divine, that is inconsistent with universal benevolence. And to suppose that love is better than law, is to suppose that obedience to law sets aside the necessity of law.



- **Objection.** It is objected, that Christians have something else to do besides meddle with politics.
- **Answer 1.** In a popular government politics are an indispensable part of religion. No man can possibly be benevolent or religious, without concerning himself, to a greater or less extent, with the affairs of human government.

- **Answer 2.** It is true, that Christians have something else to do than to go with a party to do evil, or to peddle with politics in a selfish or ungodly manner. But they are bound to meddle with politics in popular governments, for the same reason that they are bound to seek the universal good of all men.



- **Objection.** It is said, that human governments are no where expressly authorized in the Bible.
- **Answer 1.** This is a mistake. Both their existence and lawfulness are as expressly recognized in the above quoted scriptures as they can be.
- **Answer 2.** If God did not expressly authorize them, it would still be both the right and the duty of mankind to institute human governments; because they are plainly demanded by the necessities of human nature. It is a first truth, that whatever is essential to the highest good of moral beings in any world, they have a right and are bound to do. So far, therefore, are men from needing any express authority to establish human governments, that no possible prohibition could render their establishment unlawful. It has been shown, in my lectures on moral government, that moral law is a unit--that it is that rule of action which is in accordance with the nature, relations and circumstances of moral beings--that whatever is in accordance with the nature, relations and circumstances of moral beings--that whatever is in accordance with, and demanded by the nature, relations, and circumstances of moral beings, is obligatory on them. It is moral law, and no power in the universe can set it aside. Therefore, were the scriptures entirely silent on the subject of human governments, and on the subject of family government, as it actually is on a great many important subjects, this would be no objection to the lawfulness, and expediency; necessity, and duty of establishing human governments.



- **Objection.** It is said, that human governments are founded in and sustained by force, and that this is inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel.
- **Answer 1.** There cannot be a difference between the spirit of the Old and New Testaments, or between the spirit of the law and the gospel, unless God has changed, and unless Christ has undertaken to make void the law, through faith, which cannot be. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."
- **Answer 2.** Just human governments, and such governments only are contended for, will not exercise force, unless it is demanded to promote the highest public good. If it be necessary to this end, it can never be wrong. Nay, it must be the duty of human governments to inflict penalties, when their infliction is demanded by the public interest.



- **Objection.** It is said, that there should be no laws with penalties.
- **Answer.** This is the same as to say, there should be no law at all; for that is no law which has no penalty, but only advice.



- **Objection.** It is said, that church government is sufficient to meet the necessities of the world, without secular or state governments.
- **Answer 1.** What! Church governments regulate commerce, make internal improvements, and undertake to manage all the business affairs of the world!
- **Answer 2.** Church government was never established for any such end; but simply to regulate the spiritual, in distinction from the secular concerns of men--to try offenders and inflict spiritual chastisement, and never to perplex and embarrass itself with managing the business and commercial operations of the world.



- **Objection.** It is said, that were all the world holy, legal penalties would not be needed.
- **Answer.** Were all men perfectly holy, the execution of penalties would not be needed; but still, if there were law, there would be penalties; and it would be both the right and the duty of magistrates to inflict them, should their execution be called for.



- **Objection.** It is asserted, that family government is the only form of government approved of God.
- **Answer.** This is a ridiculous assertion:
  - 1. Because God as expressly commands obedience to magistrates as to parents.
  - 2. He makes it as absolutely the duty of magistrates to punish crime, as of parents to punish their own disobedient children.
  - 3. The right of family government is not founded in the arbitrary will of God, but in the necessities of human beings; so that family government would be both allowable and obligatory, had God said nothing about it.

- 4. So, the right of human government has not its foundation in the arbitrary will of God, but in the necessities of human beings. The larger the community the more absolute the necessity of government. If, in the small circle of the family, laws and penalties are needed, how much more in the larger communities of states and nations. Now, neither the ruler of a family, nor of any other form of human government, has a right to legislate arbitrarily, or enact, or enforce any other laws, than those that are in accordance with the nature, relations, and circumstances of human beings. Nothing can be law in heaven--nothing can be law on earth; nothing can be obligatory on moral beings, but that which is founded in the nature, relations, and circumstances of moral beings. But human beings are bound to establish family governments, state governments, national governments, and, in short, whatever government may be requisite for the universal instruction, government, virtue, and happiness of the world.
- 5. All the reasons, therefore, for family government, hold equally in favor of state and national governments.
- 6. There are vastly higher and weightier reasons for governments over states and nations, than in the small communities of families.
- 7. Therefore, neither family nor state governments need the express sanction of God, to render them obligatory; for both the right and duty of establishing and maintaining these governments would remain, had the Bible been entirely silent on the subject. But on this, as on many other subjects, God has spoken and declared, what is the common and universal law, plainly recognizing both the right and duty of family and human governments.
- 8. Christians, therefore, have something else to do, than to confound the right of government with the abuse of this right by the ungodly. Instead of destroying human governments, Christians are bound to reform them.
- 9. To attempt to destroy, instead of reforming human governments, is the same in principle as is often plead by those who are attempting to destroy, rather than reform the Church. There are those, who, disgusted with the abuses of Christianity practiced in the Church, seem bent on destroying the Church altogether, as the means of saving the world. But what mad policy is this!
- 10. It is admitted, that selfish men need and must have the restraints of law; but that Christians should have no part in restraining them by law. But suppose the wicked should agree among themselves to have no law, and therefore should not attempt to restrain themselves nor each other by law; would it be neither the right nor the duty of Christians to attempt their restraint, through the influence of wholesome government?
- 11. It is strange, that selfish men should need the restraints of law, and yet that

Christians have no right to meet this necessity, by supporting governments that will restrain them. What is this but admitting, that the world really needs the restraints of governments--that the highest good of the universe demands their existence; and yet, that it is wicked for Christians to seek the highest good of the world, by meeting this necessity in the establishment and support of human governments! It is right and best, that there should be law. It is necessary, that there should be. Therefore, universal benevolence demands it; but it is wicked in Christians, to have any thing to do with it! This is singular logic.

**EIGHTH.** The reasons why God has made no form of church or state government universally obligatory.

- 1. That God has nowhere in the Bible given directions in regard to any particular form of church or secular government, is a matter of fact.
- 2. That he did not consider the then existing forms, either of church or state government, as of perpetual obligation, is also certain. He did not give directions in regard to particular forms of government, either church or state:
  - (1.) Because no such directions could be given, without producing great revolutions and governmental opposition to Christianity. The governments of the world are, and always have been, exceedingly various in form. To attempt, therefore, to insist upon any particular form, as being universally obligatory, would be calling out great national opposition to religion.
  - (2.) Because, that no particular form of church or state government, either now is, or ever has been, suited to all degrees of intelligence, and states of society.
  - (3.) Because the forms of both church and state governments, need to be changed, with any great elevations or depressions of society, in regard to their intelligence and virtue.

**NINTH.** The particular forms of church and state governments, must and will depend upon the virtue and intelligence of the people.

- 1. Democracy is self-government, and can never be safe or useful, only so far as there is sufficient intelligence and virtue in the community to impose, by mutual consent, salutary self-restraints, and to enforce by the power of public sentiment, and by the fear and love of God, the practice of those virtues which are indispensable to the highest good of any community.
- 2. Republics are another and less perfect form of self-government.
- 3. When there are not sufficient intelligence and virtue among the people, to legislate in accordance with the highest good of the state or nation, then both democracies and republics are improper and impracticable, as forms of government.

- 4. When there is too little intelligence and virtue in the mass of the people, to legislate on correct principles, monarchies are better calculated to restrain vice and promote virtue.
- 5. In the worst states of society, despotisms, either civil or military, are the only proper and efficient forms of government.
- 6. When virtue and intelligence are nearly universal, democratic forms of government are well suited to promote the public good.
- 7. In such a state of society, democracy is greatly conducive to the diffusion of knowledge on governmental subjects.
- 8. Although in some respects less convenient, and more expensive, yet in a suitable state of society, a democracy is in many respects the most desirable form, either of church or state government:
  - (1.) It is conducive, as has been already said, to general intelligence.
  - (2.) Under a democracy, the people are more generally acquainted with the laws.
  - (3.) They are more interested in them.
  - (4.) This form of government creates a more general feeling of individual responsibility.
  - (5.) Governmental questions are more apt to be thoroughly discussed and understood before they are adopted.
  - (6.) As the diffusion of knowledge is favorable to individual and public virtue, democracy is highly conducive to virtue and happiness.
- 9. God has always providentially given to mankind those forms of government that were suited to the degrees of virtue and intelligence among them.
- 10. If they have been extremely ignorant and vicious, He has restrained them by the iron rod of human despotism.
- 11. If more intelligent and virtuous, He has given them the milder forms of limited monarchies.
- 12. If still more intelligent and virtuous, He has given them still more liberty, and providentially established republics for their government.
- 13. Whenever the general state of intelligence has permitted it, He has put them to the test of self-government and self-restraint, by establishing democracies.
- 14. If the world ever becomes perfectly virtuous, both church and state governments will be

proportionally modified, and employed in expounding and applying the great principles of moral law, to the spiritual and secular concerns of men.

- 15. The above principles are equally applicable to church and state governments. Episcopacy is well suited to a state of general ignorance among the people. Presbyterianism, or Church Republicanism, is better suited to a more advanced state of intelligence, and the prevalence of Christian principle. While Congregationalism, or Spiritual Democracy, is best suited, and only suited to a state of general intelligence, and the prevalence of Christian principle.
- 16. God's providence has always modified both church and state governments, so as to suit the intelligence and virtue of the people. As churches and nations rise and fall in the scale of virtue and intelligence, these various forms of government naturally and necessarily give place to each other. So that ecclesiastical and state despotism, or liberty, depends naturally, providentially, and necessarily upon the virtue and intelligence of the people. That form of government is obligatory, that is best suited to meet the necessities of the people:
  - (1.) This follows as a self-evident truth, from the consideration, that it is necessity alone that creates the right of human government. To meet these necessities, is the object of government; and that government is obligatory and best, which is demanded by the circumstances, intelligence, and morals of the people.
  - (2.) Consequently, in certain states of society, it would be a Christian's duty to pray for and sustain even a military despotism; in a certain other state of society, to pray for and sustain a republic; and in a still more advanced stage of virtue and intelligence, to pray for and sustain a democracy; if indeed a democracy is the most wholesome form of self-government, which may admit a doubt.

**TENTH.** The true basis on which the right of human legislation rests.

Under this head, I need only to repeat the substance of what has already been said, that the right of human legislation is founded in the necessities of mankind--that the nature and ignorance of mankind lie at the foundation of this necessity--and, that their wickedness, the multiplicity and variety of their wants, are additional reasons, demanding the existence of human governments. Let it be understood, then, that the foundation of the right of human governments lies not in the arbitrary will of God; but in the nature, relations, and circumstances of human beings.

**ELEVENTH.** Revolutions become necessary and obligatory, when the virtue and intelligence, or the vice and ignorance of the people demand them.

- 1. This is a thing of course. When one form of government fails to meet any longer the necessities of the people, it is the duty of the people to revolutionize.
- 2. In such cases, it is in vain to oppose revolution; for in some way the benevolence of God will bring it about. Upon this principle alone, can what is generally termed the American Revolution be justified. The intelligence and virtue of our Puritan fore-fathers rendered a monarchy an unnecessary burden, and a republican form of government both appropriate and necessary. And



God always allows his children as much liberty as they are prepared to enjoy.

- 3. The stability of our republican institutions must depend upon the progress of general intelligence and virtue. If in these respects the nation falls, if general intelligence, public and private virtue sink to that point below which self-control becomes impossible, we must fall back into monarchy, limited or absolute; or into a civil or military despotism; just according to the national standard of intelligence and virtue. This is just as certain as that God governs the world, or that causes produce their effects.
- 4. Therefore, it is the maddest conceivable policy, for Christians to uproot human governments, while they ought to be engaged in sustaining them, upon the great principles of the moral law. It is certainly stark nonsense, if not abominable wickedness, to overlook, either in theory or practice, these plain, common sense, and universal truths.

**TWELFTH.** In what cases human legislation is valid.

- 1. Human legislation is valid, when called for by the necessities--that is--by the nature, relations and circumstances of the people.
- 2. Just that kind and degree of human legislation which are demanded by the necessities of the people are obligatory.
- 3. Human legislation is utterly null and void in all other cases whatever; and I may add, that divine legislation would be equally null and void--unless demanded by the nature, relations, and necessities of human beings. Consequently, human beings can never legislate in opposition to the moral law. Whatever is inconsistent with supreme love to God, and equal love to our neighbor, can by no possibility be obligatory.
- 4. We may yield obedience, when the thing required does not involve a violation of moral obligation.
- 5. We are bound to yield obedience, when legislation is in accordance with the law of nature.
- 6. We are bound to obey, when the thing required has no moral character in itself; upon the principle, that obedience, in this case, is a less evil than revolution or misrule. But--
- 7. We are bound, in all cases, to disobey, when human legislation contravenes moral law, or invades the rights of conscience.

**IV. The principles upon which God deals with nations as such.**

- 1. Each nation is regarded by God as a unit. Nations are regarded as public persons.
- 2. They are regarded as amenable to Him for their conduct.
- 3. As bound by the principle of the moral law--that is, they are bound to legislate and adjudicate

in accordance with the law of nature, or that rule of conduct that requires every moral being to love God with all the heart, and his neighbor as himself.

- 4. His dealings with nations are only providential, and necessarily confined to this world. Nations as such, do not exist in a future world. And, of course, this must be with nations a state of retribution, instead of being a state of trial or probation.
- 5. As nations, He treats them according to their outward conduct. This is a thing of course. Nations as such, have no private character. Their character is public. They are regarded as public persons, and treated according to the manner in which they outwardly demean themselves towards God and his government. Upon this tenure the Jews manifestly held their worldly possessions. And God's treatment of nations as such, in every age, has demonstrated the truth, that nations are providentially treated according to their public acts. Indeed as nations they have no other than public acts. For what individuals do is not regarded as national acts, unless these individuals are heads of government, and acting in a governmental capacity.
- 6. As the righteous and the wicked are mingled together in human governments, they are providentially treated alike, it being improper and impossible, when dealing with a nation as such, to make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked.
- 7. In eternity, God will treat rulers and ruled, according to their private characters, as they shall appear in the light of the moral law.

#### **V. The design, propriety, and use of national fasts.**

- 1. It is no part of the design, either of private or public fasting, to make amends for past wrongs by doing penance.
- 2. But they are designed as a public recognition of national responsibility to God.
- 3. They are designed as a public confession of national sins.
- 4. As a public profession of national repentance, and renunciation of them.
- 5. This is eminently proper in respect to national sins. For, as national sins are always public sins, they should always be as publicly confessed and renounced. This should be done by the Executive Magistrate of the nation. Indeed, there seems to be no other way to put away national sins, so as to dispense with the necessity of national judgments, but by the appointment of national fasts, national confessions, and national repentance. As national sins are not private sins, private repentance will not meet the demands of the divine government. If God does not punish nations for their sins, there must be some public reason for withholding his judgments. And as this is with nations a state of reward, God's relation to the universe demands, that He should visit national sins with national judgments, unless they are nationally renounced; that is--renounced by a national public appointment of a fast, which is the most emphatic form of making a national confession.

- 6. National fasts are useful, as they often avert the judgments of God. The case of Nineveh is an illustrious example of this.
- 7. They are a public and national rebuke of infidelity, and a public acknowledgment of the existence, government, and goodness of God.
- 8. They tend to arouse and quicken the public conscience.
- 9. They give ministers an opportunity to expose and rebuke national vices.

#### **VI. The duty of citizens, and especially of Christians as citizens, in respect to fasts.**

- 1. It is their duty to abstain from the ordinary business of life. Public fasts are to be publicly celebrated. Both magistrates and people are bound to lay aside their ordinary business, and attend on the solemn and public confession of their sins.
- 2. It is their duty to attend public worship, and unite in public confessions. And were it possible for this whole nation to assemble at Washington, and there, with the President at their head, unite in the public confession and renunciation of their sins, it would undoubtedly be their duty. On such occasions, and on this occasion, it would no doubt be eminently proper for the governors and heads of departments in the several states--for the houses of congress, to be assembled, and thus the representatives of the whole people appear before the Lord, to make public confession of the sins of the nation.
- 3. It is the duty of all citizens, to use whatever appropriate means are within their power, to bring about a complete national reformation.

#### **VII. Some of the national sins which call this nation to fasting, humiliation, and prayer.**

- 1. The outrageous injustice with which this nation has treated the aborigines of this country. The shameless wickedness of this nation, in respect to the manner in which the Indians have been duped in making treaties with them--the shocking and disgraceful manner in which these treaties have been violated by this government, is almost too bad to name. Who can mention or think of these things, without grief and indignation? How these helpless Indians have been trampled down, and in multitudes of ways oppressed and injured, until their cry has come up into the ears of Jehovah!
- 2. I notice the hypocrisy of this nation, in shedding British blood in defense of principles which, when applied to their own wrongs, they have always denied. As the very basis of the Revolution, they publicly declared, that "ALL MEN were born free and equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights--among which are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness." Now, at the very time at which this declaration was made--the very men who made it--and the nation that proclaimed these truths, as an excuse for revolution and war, stood with their unsanctified feet upon the necks of the prostrate slaves! And from that day to this, this nation as such has continued, publicly and practically, when these wrongs were held up to view, to deny the principles upon which the Revolution was based; while, at the same time, she has,

in view of the wrongs received from the mother country, strenuously maintained them--thus at the same time both maintaining and denying these great truths--when herself oppressed, maintaining them and fighting in defense of them--when accused of oppression, denying them, and ready to fight in support of the opposite doctrine.

- 3. I notice the national treatment of the question of the abolition of slavery, as another of those heinous sins for which this nation ought to blush. Is it not astonishing, that in this government the friends of the oppressed are not even allowed to petition? Our government will not so much as suffer itself to be asked to "undo the heavy burdens." "Concerning oppression they speak loftily." And could we this day meet with the public assemblies in the city of Washington, we might perhaps hear the conduct of Abolitionists, in seeking the abolition of slavery, pointed out as one of the great sins of the people, in endeavoring, as they would express it, "to dissolve the Union."
- 4. The great wickedness in forming, and in attempting to support a Union upon such principles. It is "a league of iniquity." The nation never had a right, in their constitution or in any other way, to recognize the lawfulness of slavery, and guarantee the protection of states in holding their fellowmen in bondage. The compact was an utter abomination. The union was a league against God. And now our public men make this excuse for supporting slavery, that by the stipulations of the constitution, they are bound to do so. Now admitting that the constitution does ever so expressly contain such stipulations, are they, can they be binding? What! can it be obligatory on the nation, or any set of men, to violate the great law of love, because they have promised to do so. Suppose the different states had entered into a stipulation to carry on the slave trade for ever--could such a promise as this be binding on any of them? Suppose each state had promised to fit out and keep, upon the high seas, a certain number of pirate ships, to rob all the nations of the earth, to supply the public treasury with funds--could such an abominable compact be binding? Would any state have a right to abide by such a stipulation as this? No, no more than a contract to keep up a perpetual war with heaven could be binding. The fact is, that neither individuals nor nations can ever bind themselves by any promise to do wrong, to violate the law of love. Can a man render it lawful for him to murder, by promising to murder? If this be so, any sin may cease to be sin, become obligatory, and consequently a virtue, simply by promising to do it. It is lamentable and shameful, that this nation should try to preserve a union, based upon such principles as these. If the union cannot be preserved, except by abiding by a stipulation to sustain slavery, or not to interfere with it, let it be given up. It is in the highest degree rebellion against God, to attempt to support it upon such principles.
- 5. I call your attention to the national desecration of the Sabbath, especially by the Post Office Department. In this department of our government, our nation has literally "framed iniquity by a law," and absolutely legislated in direct opposition to the law of God. It is by no means wonderful that this department is so often crippled in its movements--that its accounts are so often embarrassed.--The curse of God is upon it. This is just what might be expected, for it is managed by a host of Sabbath breakers. If this department of government be not yet more sorely rebuked than it has been, and if the government should in general continue in its present form--if the Post Office Department continue its shameless violation of the Sabbath, I shall be disappointed if God does not mark it yet more signally with his curse.

- 6. Again, I notice the national love of money, which is the root and foundation of this public desecration of the Sabbath. This nation has seemed to be ready to go almost any length in obtaining wealth, and to set aside the law of God whenever it has interfered with its grasping after worldly goods.
- 7. I notice the notorious licentiousness and intemperance of many of our rulers. It is commonly reported, and I suppose truly, that during the sessions of Congress, the city of Washington exhibits a scene of most disgusting licentiousness and intemperance on the part of many of those who are entrusted with, and voluntarily put into places of power, and made the conservators of the public morals.
- 8. I notice duel-fighting and murderous deeds that are almost every year practiced in Congress. Is it too much to say that no nation is so wicked as this? Where can a nation be found, so enlightened on religious subjects as this nation, yet so recklessly, perversely, and even wantonly trampling down the government of God?
- 9. I notice the wickedness of political contests, and especially the great sins that were committed during the election of the late President. We are assembled to celebrate a fast appointed in view of the recent death of that President. Now who can wonder that he was taken away by a stroke of Divine Providence, in the very beginning of his official career? Who ever witnessed such disgraceful and bacchanalian scenes as very generally disgusted the eyes and grieved the hearts of the friends of virtue during that political struggle? What low, vulgar, indecent, and in many instances, profane measures were resorted to? They are too bad to name. Who does not know that "Tippecanoe" and "Hard Cider," and almost every other abomination, were the watch-words and the measures for carrying that election? My soul mourns when I say it. God forbid that I should say it to bring a railing accusation against my country. Were they not already public I would never make them so. I call your attention to them that they may be confessed among the guilt and God-dishonoring sins of this nation.

There are numerous other sins of this nation to be confessed and put away. But I have not time to call your attention to any more at present.

## **REMARKS.**

1. As Christians, we ought to confess and lament the sectarianism and divisions of the Church, as lying at the foundation of, and as giving countenance to the strivings, slang and slander of party politics. Who can look into the religious periodicals without agony, at seeing that there is almost as much party spirit, division, censoriousness, and slander in the Church, as among party politicians. Indeed the difficulty is, the politics existing in the Church are continually keeping in countenance those political contests that are working the destruction of this nation. I say this with humiliation and trembling, because it has become so common to accuse those who would deal faithfully with the sins of the Church, of being slanderers.

2. As Christians, we ought to confess the wickedness of the Church in view of its bearing toward and treatment of those national sins of which I have spoken. What is the conduct of the Church as a body,

and what is her attitude in respect to the dreadful sin of slavery. O tell not the shameful story in Gath, nor let the sound reach Askalon, that the American Church is to such a shameful extent, an apologist for slavery. And what has the Church, as such, ever done to reprove and rebuke this nation for its treatment of the Indians? Why has not her voice been heard? Why has not the Church as a body respectfully remonstrated? Why has she not at least lifted up her voice and wept in view of these abominations? And what is the conduct of the Church in respect to party politics? Why, there have always been professed Christians enough in this country to hold the balance of power. It has always been in the power of Christians to elect or defeat the election of any candidate for President who has ever been proposed. Would the Church only be in earnest in maintaining correct principles, would they be agreed in letting the world know that they would vote for no man who did not fear God, no party in that case would think of proposing a candidate of loose, or even of doubtful character. If they would be united in going always for a man of the highest moral standing, such candidates, and such only, would be proposed by the respective parties. But as it is, they have adopted the miserably wicked policy of choosing between two moral evils. Instead of choosing the best of two good men, they consent to vote for the least immoral of two bad men, thus rendering themselves responsible for the sins of this nation. It is completely within the power of the Church effectually to rebuke and put away all the sins that disgrace the nation. And how long shall the skirts of the Church be defiled with these abominations?

3. The righteous may well be expected to be included and share largely in national judgments. They really deserve it.

4. How absurd it is to say, that Christians have nothing to do with human governments. They should immediately set about the moral reformation of government. But here the question arises, how can such a reformation be brought about? I answer:

(1.) It never can be brought about by that kind of party movement--such party men and party measures as have brought this nation to such a pass of wickedness. Such party measures can never work a reformation of public morals. They are of themselves a vile and loathsome offense to public morals.

(2.) The needed reformation can never be brought about by contending for truth in a wrong spirit. There is something very remarkable in the Providence of God in this respect. Facts in the history of the world demonstrate that God would rather even truth should suffer a temporary defeat than triumph when maintained in a bad spirit. Besides there is something in the spirit which in such instances contradicts the truth, and prevents it from being received as truth. Whenever any set of men, however much truth they may have on their side, get into a wrong spirit, in the proclamation and defense of it, they may expect that God will give them up to defeat. Men who hold the truth are very apt to be presumptuous, to take it for granted, and to boast, that they shall prevail because they have the truth. But mark me, and mark the fact when you will, that in this they will be disappointed. The truth will indeed eventually prevail, but not in their hands. God will give them over as individuals and as a party, to ultimate defeat, and in his own time, through other instrumentalities, cause his truth to prevail.

(3.) This reformation must be brought about and may be brought about by promoting

union among Christians, and by extending correct views on the subject of Christian responsibility in regard to their relation to government. Any thing that will unite the Church, and consolidate her efforts, and direct them wisely on this point, will correct the national morals, and nothing else can.

5. The private views, character, or motives of the rulers in appointing a fast have nothing to do with the obligation of citizens in respect to its observance. If the ruler were an infidel, or whatever his private views or designs might be, in appointing a public fast, it is the business and duty of the people to celebrate the fast, confess and lament the real sins of the nation. If the present chief magistrate of the United States had been consulted in respect to the sins he would have the people confess, it is very probable that among them he would have mentioned the efforts of abolitionists to effect the overthrow of slavery, or as he would more probably have expressed it, the heinous crime of northern interference with the domestic institutions of the South, and an unrighteous attempt to divide the Union. Now with his private opinion on such questions the nation has nothing to do. Our business is to confess, among other enormities, the disgraceful and God-provoking sin of slavery, together with the wicked opposition of this nation to the efforts of abolitionists to bring about its overthrow.

6. Before I close this discourse, I must add a few words on the necessity of abstinence from food, as in many cases entirely indispensable to a right state of religious feeling. If the alimentary organs be continually taxed to the amount of their capability, the mind can be exercised to but a limited extent. Especially is it next to impossible, that much emotion should exist, while the digestive organs are laboriously employed in the process of alimentation. As I have before remarked, so great a determination of blood to these organs, is imperiously demanded during the process of digestion, that the mind, whose organ is the brain, must be, comparatively, and in many instances, to a great degree sluggish in its operations. Who has not learned, by his own experience, that if he is about to make a great mental effort, he must not indulge himself in a full meal immediately preceding it? Many persons, either because they are so much under the dominion of their appetite, or because they have imbibed a false notion, that to drop now and then a meal will seriously impair their health, continually and regularly load their alimentary organs to such an extent, as to render it impossible for their minds to be strongly exercised on any subject. Fasting is often useful, and sometimes indispensable, as a means of giving the mind a thorough opportunity to exercise itself, without being impeded in its action by a determination of the blood to the alimentary organs.

7. Persons in fasting should always guard against a self-righteous state of mind. Self-righteous fasting is worse than no fasting at all.

8. Fasting, either public or private, without reformation, is a great abomination to God. It is to be hoped, that our President did not intend to substitute national fasting for national reformation. But we shall see, what course they will take in regard to slavery, the treatment of the Indians, the sanctification of the Sabbath, licentiousness, dueling, intemperance, & c., at the next session of Congress. Our rulers may expect, of course, that the people will have their eye upon them, and anxiously wait to see whether they expect to escape the judgment of God, by fasting without reformation. O, it would be dreadful, if, notwithstanding their fastings, they should persist in their sins! If they should forget that the fast was a national fast, and merely expect the reformation of individuals, without national reformation, it would be but the more offensive to God; and our fasting would but hasten our destruction.

9. Let Christians every where continue to pray, that God may reform the nation, and that our rulers may not be guilty of so gross a hypocrisy as to appoint a national fast, and then persevere in our national abominations. If they do this, it will not be surprising, if the nation should soon be called to mourn the death of another President, or that some judgment infinitely more deplorable than this, should soon desolate our country.

10. We are to be especially on our guard in contemplating the sins of this nation, certainly those of us who are, and from principle always have been opposed to those sins, lest we imbibe a censorious, angry spirit, instead of feeling a deep and real sorrow for those sins. It is of no use to scold about our national sins. Our business is to lament them, to warn, entreat, respectfully expostulate, petition Congress, and petition God, that they may be put away.

11. Let no man say, that ministers are out of their place in exposing and reproofing the sins of this nation. The fact is, that ministers, and all other men, not only have a right but are bound to expose and rebuke the national sins. We are all on board the same ship. As a nation, our very existence depends upon the correct moral conduct of our rulers. And shall they deafen their ears to our petitions, expostulations, and entreaties? Shall ministers be told, shall any man be told, that he is meddling with other men's matters, when he reproofs, and rebukes the abominations of slavery? As well might a man be accused of meddling with that which does not belong to him, who is on board a ship in the midst of the Atlantic ocean, because he should expostulate with and rebuke a man who should attempt to scuttle the ship.

## **Mediatorship of Christ**

Lecture XXXV

June 23, 1841

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--1 Tim. 2:5: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

In discussing this subject, I shall--

*I. Show what a mediator is.*

*II. Some things implied in the existence of that office.*

*III. What are essential qualifications for the office of mediator.*



*IV. On what conditions the end of the mediatorial office can in any case be accomplished.*

*V. Apply these principles to Christ as mediator between God and men.*

### **I. Show what a mediator is.**

- 1. A mediator is one who undertakes to bring about a reconciliation between contending parties. If there be no controversy, there is no room for a mediator, and no reason for the existence of such an office.
- 2. A mediator is not an arbitrator. An arbitrator is one to whose judgment both the law and the facts are submitted, for adjudication, in a case of right. A mediator is one who interposes in behalf of the offending party, and undertakes to bring the parties into a state of reconciliation, where the fact, or question of right, is already decided, and the thing to be accomplished is to remove difficulties, fulfill conditions, and effect a reconciliation, upon the acknowledged principles of right, or public justice.

### **II. Some things implied in the existence of that office.**

- 1. The existence of the mediatorial office implies the existence of two or more parties.
- 2. That a controversy exists between them.
- 3. That there is some difficulty in the way of their adjusting their own difficulties in proper person. This difficulty may arise:
  - (1.) Out of an indisposition in one or all the parties to adjust their differences; or,
  - (2.) It may arise out of the inability of the offending party to make the satisfaction which is rendered indispensable by the relations and circumstances of the offending party.

### **III. Essential qualifications for the office of mediator.**

- 1. A mediator must be in circumstances to understand the whole controversy, in all its bearings and tendencies.
- 2. He must possess the confidence of all the parties. If he has not their confidence, they will not voluntarily submit the question in dispute to his mediatorial adjustment. Therefore the confidence of the parties is indispensable to his success.
- 3. He must sustain such relations to the parties, as to be the suitable person to discharge the functions of that office.
- 4. He must be both able and willing to fulfill all the indispensable conditions of the reconciliation.

#### **IV. On what conditions the end of the mediatorial office can, in any case, be accomplished.**

- 1. He must be consecrated to the office by the consent of parties.
- 2. The consent of the mediator to undertake and accomplish the work of bringing about a reconciliation.
- 3. The acceptance, by the parties, of the conditions proposed by the mediator.
- 4. The actual fulfillment of these conditions by the parties.

#### **V. These principles applied to Christ, as mediator between God and men.**

- 1. I said, the office implies the existence of two parties. Both parties are mentioned in the text: on the one hand, Jehovah--on the other, man as a race. These are the parties, between whom Christ is appointed to act as mediator.
- 2. I said, the existence of a mediator implies, that a controversy is existing between the parties. That there is a controversy between God and men, is one of the most notorious facts in the universe. It is impossible, that God should approve the conduct of mankind. It cannot be, that He does not disapprove, and that He is not highly displeased with the course of conduct pursued by our race. He cannot but know what the conduct of mankind is. He cannot but approve of disapprove their conduct. For Him to approve their conduct would be to be as bad as they are. He cannot possibly be a virtuous being, unless He highly and infinitely abhor the selfishness of mankind.

Nor can it be possible, that selfish men, remaining selfish, love God. They are hostile to God, because He is so holy as to require of them entire benevolence, on pain of eternal death. This He ought to require. Nothing less than this can He require and be virtuous. But, for this very requirement, men hate Him; and because they hate Him for his goodness, He must certainly, and, if He be a good being, must necessarily abhor them. But the actual state of things in the world shows, that the world is full of blasphemous opposition to the government of God, on the one hand, and that, on the other hand, God is sweeping the nations, from time to time, with the besom of destruction. It is manifestly open, outrageous war, between God and men--God exercising as much forbearance all along as the nature of the case admits--while men, encouraged by his forbearance, are pushing their desperate opposition in the most fool-hardy and blasphemous manner. To maintain, that there is no controversy between God and men, is to deny one of the most universally evident facts that exists in the universe.

- 3. I said, that the existence of a mediator implies a difficulty in the way of their coming together and adjusting their own matters in difference, and that this difficulty might arise out of an indisposition in one or both the parties to have the matter adjusted, or out of the relation of the parties to each other. Hence, I observe:
  - (1.) The necessity of a mediator between God and men did not arise out of any

unmerciful disposition on the part of God, or any disinclination on his part to pardon sin, if it could be safely done in consistency with the stability of his government. God is love, and of course infinitely disposed to do good whenever He wisely can. It is absurd to say, that an infinitely benevolent being should not be merciful in his disposition, and that He should not actually exercise mercy in the pardon of crime, whenever it can be done consistently with the public interest.

- (2.) But on the part of man, there actually is, and always has been, a most pertinacious indisposition to have this matter adjusted, and to become reconciled to God. Therefore, if they ever are to be reconciled, some one must undertake the mediatorial office, who is able to bring about the requisite change in the temper of their mind towards God.
- (3.) A difficulty arose out of the relation of the parties to each other, or rather, out of God's relations to the universe. As God is the law-giver, public justice demanded, either that He should execute the law when it was violated, or provide a substitute, that would as effectually sustain the government, as the execution would do. Hence, from the relation of God to the universe, it is plain, that He must exact a condition as indispensable to effecting a reconciliation between Him and men; which condition mankind could not fulfill. The necessity, then, of a mediator, was two-fold:
  - (a) To meet the demands of public justice, and provide a substitute for the execution of law upon mankind. And,
  - (b) To subdue the selfish and turbulent spirit of the offending party--to humble mankind, make them willing to confess, repent, and be reconciled to God.
- 4. I said, a mediator must possess a nature and be in circumstances to understand the whole controversy, in all its bearings and tendencies. Now Christ had the omniscience of God, together with the experience of a man, and was, therefore, the only being in the universe who, in the same sense, could understand the precise attitude of affairs between God and men. As God, He knew and had always known the precise adaptedness of the law to the nature and circumstances of mankind. He had seen sin at its first entrance into the world; and beginning with the first human pair, He had seen it, like a fountain opened in a mountain, running and spreading itself as it advanced, first a rill, then a brook, next a river, and finally an ocean, extending through all the ranks of mankind, and filling the earth, and finally pouring the immense stream of human population over the vast cataract of death, to be swallowed up in the dreadful vortex of damnation.

As man, He had the experience of a man--knew all the difficulties in the way of rendering perfect obedience to the moral law, under circumstances of the severest temptation. If any allowance should be made under the government of God for sin, in the circumstances in which mankind were placed, the man Christ Jesus had the opportunity to know, and must of necessity have tested the question in his own personal experience.

- 5. I said, a mediator must sustain such relations to the parties, as to be the person to whom the office naturally belongs.

- (1.) Christ sustained to the universe the relation of an Executive Magistrate. It was therefore his duty to execute the law, or to provide a substitute for its execution. That He sustains this relation to the universe is evident from his own assertions. It is said of Him, "The government is upon his shoulder," that "He is head over all things to the Church," that "all power in heaven and earth is in his hands," that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son," that "He will judge the world," and distribute the rewards of eternity. He commissions ambassadors, which none can do but the Supreme Executive Magistrate. These, with many other considerations that might be adduced, render it certain that Christ sustains to the universe the relation of the Supreme Executive. It therefore belonged to Him either to execute the law, or to provide such a substitute for its execution as fully to meet the demands of public justice.

As God, He was infinitely concerned to secure the stability of his government, and the virtue of the universe.

Being also man, and sustaining the same relation to men that He did to God, rendered it peculiarly proper, that He should interpose his influence with his Father, who in this respect sustained the relation of the law-giver, in behalf of his fellow-men.

- 6. I said, a mediator must possess the confidence of both parties. That Christ actually possesses the confidence of the Father, we have the fullest assurance in the Father's own assertions: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him." That He deserves the confidence of men will be questioned by none but infidels. And I may farther say, that He actually possesses the confidence of every man who is benefitted by his mediatorial interposition. Every one knows, that faith, or confidence in Christ, is every where in the Bible insisted on, as wholly indispensable to being interested in his salvation. So that, as a matter of fact, the mediator must and does possess the confidence of all the parties who are to be, or can be benefitted by his interposition.
- 7. I said, a mediator must be able and willing to fulfill the indispensable conditions of reconciliation. Christ being God, and sustaining to the universe the relation of the Executive Magistrate, He could, by offering his own person, more than satisfy the demands of public justice; that is--his death, as their substitute, would be a higher evidence of his regard to the law, and determination not to relinquish its claims, than would be the infliction of its penalty on all mankind. Public justice demands, that the law should be sustained, for the protection of public and private interests. Law is public property, and every subject of any government is interested in the execution of any law, when its penalty is incurred. The very establishment of government is a pledge, on the part of the law-giver, that he will protect the public interests, and do all that the nature of the case admits, to secure public virtue and happiness; or, in other words, to secure universal respect and obedience to the laws. The execution of the penalty is designed and calculated to prevent future breaches of the law--to secure respect and obedience to the law, by demonstrating both the intention and the ability of the law-giver--to redeem his pledge and protect the public interests. Now who cannot see, that if the law-giver himself will consent to suffer as the substitute of his guilty subjects, it will do much more to sustain his government, to

create confidence, love, and energetic attachment to him, than merely to execute the law upon the offenders? Mercy must not, and in a perfect government cannot be exercised, and the penalty of law set aside, without such a satisfaction made to public justice as will be equivalent to the execution of the law.

Let me illustrate this, by supposing a mighty earthly sovereign at the head of an immense army, and marching to effect some all-important object. Discipline in his army is altogether indispensable. Therefore, his orders must be most rigorously enforced, or insubordination will defeat the enterprise. But on one occasion he issues an order, against which a whole regiment rebel. Now what shall be done? It is a valuable regiment. The sovereign pities them, and yet abhors their disobedience. Either his authority must cease, that regiment must be put to the sword, or some governmental expedient must be devised, that will as effectually secure future obedience as the execution of the law would do. An order is issued for the whole army to form a hollow square. In the center of this a vast scaffold is erected, over which an immense velvet pall is thrown. The implements of punishment are prepared. The whole army with trailed arms and standards dragged in dust, muffled drums, and solemn death marches, are gathered, as they suppose, to witness the execution of the rebellious regiment. They wait in breathless expectation, for the order for the regiment to be put to death. In the mean time, this regiment is drawn out and paraded by itself alone around the scaffold. Every thing is gloomy. Sorrow fills every countenance. Every heart is heaving. Deep sighs are heard on every side, and the whole mass of mind is heaving with excitement, and agonized with the dismal prospect. At this moment, the sovereign, attended by his guards, is seen to ride within the square. He dismounts, lays aside his royal robes, uncovers his head, and arrays himself in the humble attire of a servant. Every eye is upon him. Unutterable astonishment and wonder fill every mind. No one can imagine what is now to be done. Leaving his attendants behind him, he meekly ascends the scaffold, unattended, unarmed, and thus addresses the rebellious regiment: "You have disobeyed my orders. You deserve to die! But my compassions bleed over you. To wholly set aside the penalty which you deserve, simply upon your bare repentance and return to duty--I cannot, dare not, and must not offer you forgiveness on any such conditions. My authority must be sustained. Discipline in my army is wholly indispensable. So much do I regard public justice, that sooner should heaven and earth pass away than I would set aside the execution of law, in a manner that would weaken my authority. But on the other hand, so much do I compassionate your case--so much do I love and pity you, that for the sake of being able to offer you a pardon, upon conditions that will not destroy the discipline of my army, I am willing, and about to suffer in your stead."

So saying, he uncovers his shoulders and receives upon his naked back one hundred stripes, until the blood flows down and stains the pall beneath his feet. Indeed he suffers, until a universal wail is heard--the army refuses to look on. They cover their faces, and cry out in agony, until he bids the executioner stay his hand. He resumes his garments, bows to the army, and retires to his quarters. Now what think you, would be the effect of a transaction like this upon the discipline of his army? Who would dare thereafter to rebel, and which of that rebellious regiment, or who, of his whole army, would not instantly die, to protect their sovereign, or rather than disobey him.

Now the design of Christ was, to satisfy the demands of public justice, at once to demonstrate the infinite compassion of God for his rebellious subjects, and at the same time his unalterable determination to sustain his government and enforce obedience to his law--to protect and bless the innocent--to punish and destroy the guilty. And his relation to the universe was such, that his death, I may say, was an infinitely higher expression of his compassion, on the one hand, and of his justice on the other, than could have been given in his execution of the law upon sinners.

- 8. I said, the mediator must be not only able, but willing to make any sacrifice necessary in order to remove the obstacles out of the way of such reconciliation. The Atonement has been looked upon by many, as an incredible doctrine, and aside from right apprehensions of the moral character of God, it is altogether the most incredible thing in the universe. That God should consent to suffer for man, would beggar all credibility, but for the fact, that his whole moral character is love or benevolence. When this is well considered--and it is a truth taught by all the works, and all the ways of God--the doctrine of Atonement is altogether the most reasonable and credible doctrine that can be conceived. If He is benevolence, it is certain, that He must be disposed to exercise mercy. But if He is benevolence, it is also certain, that He would exercise mercy with a due regard to public justice, and upon such conditions as not to endanger his authority. If God is love, it must be certain, that if infinite wisdom could devise a plan, whereby the ends of public justice might be consistent with the offer of pardon, He would not hesitate to adopt that plan, although it might call Him to the exercise of great self-denial. If his suffering in their stead a less amount than must necessarily be inflicted upon them, would not only render it proper to offer them mercy, but would prevail to bring them to repentance and make them virtuous, his being love would render it certain, that such would be the course of conduct He would pursue. Christ, then, was not only able but willing to offer his human nature a sacrifice to public justice. His human nature being taken into union with his divine nature, became a part of Himself. His blood was, therefore, the blood of God. His Atonement was the Atonement of God, in offering up his human nature unto death, that He might give to man eternal life.
- 9. I said, the parties must consent that He should sustain to them this relation; or, in other words, that He should be consecrated to this office by consent of parties. The Father, who is the offended party, has nominated and sent forth his own Son, and proposed that He should act as Mediator between God and men. He has consented to accept what He has done as satisfactory on the part of the government of God, as wholly removing out of the way, on the part of the divine government, every objection to a universal offer of pardon to all that will repent and return to their duty. And now the question is submitted to you, to every sinner, whether you will consent on your part to receive Christ as your Mediator. This you are to do by faith. Are you willing to do it?
- 10. I said, that another condition, upon which the accomplishment of the great object of Christ depends, is the actual fulfillment of the conditions decreed by Him as indispensable to the effecting of this reconciliation. These are on your part, sinner:
  - (1.) Repentance, or an unqualified turning yourselves, both in heart and life, from all

iniquity, and making a consecration of your whole being to God and his service for ever.

- o (2.) Faith in Christ's Atonement, as the foundation of your pardon and acceptance with God.
- o (3.) Your perseverance in holiness, or true obedience, to the end of life.

This is a summary statement of the indispensable conditions, upon the fulfillment of which depends your eternal salvation. And now what do you say? It is in vain for you to pretend to consent to the mediatorial office and character of Christ unless you consent to and fulfill the conditions imposed by Him upon you, as indispensable to your being justified through Him. This, I say, is a question for you to decide. No one can decide it for you. God, on his part, has consented. Christ as Mediator, has thrown the door wide open before you, and stands as a daysman between you and the throne of God. He, as it were, lays his hand on both the parties. The Father has committed to Him the adjustment of this difficulty, on the part of the divine government. Now will you commit to Him the keeping of your soul? Will you submit yourself to his government and control? Will you give your case into his hands, to be advocated, managed, and adjusted by Him? Will you consecrate your whole being to God, and from this time know, and prove by your own conduct, that the controversy between you and God is at an end. Now, therefore, "as an ambassador for Christ, pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

#### **REMARKS.**

1. In the light of this subject you see the disinterested love of Christ. O how infinitely wonderful, that He should consent to undertake such an office as this, fully knowing as He did the immense sacrifice to which it would call Him--the immense amount of shame, persecution, agony, and death and for what? For Himself?--to promote some selfish interest? No! But from disinterested love to you and me. What an exhibition of self-denial, his whole life being only an accumulation of sufferings, reproach, ridicule, and opposition. How great his mental agonies must have been. In the midst of a world created by Him, and yet ruining themselves with their blasphemous opposition to Him!

2. From this subject you can see for what we are to trust Christ as Mediator:

(1.) We are to look to Him for sanctification, for that measure of grace that will thoroughly cleanse us from all our sins.

(2.) We are to look to Him for justification, that is, pardon and acceptance in respect to all our past sins.

(3.) We are to look to Him for preserving grace, to quicken and sustain us to the end.

3. You see from this subject, what it is to be a Christian. It is heartily to consent to the mediatorial work of Christ, and to comply with the conditions upon which he offers to save.

4. From this subject you can see the security of the saints. The controversy between them and God is at an end. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And now

what shall be able to separate them from the love of Christ? "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. From this subject also we see the certainty of the final damnation of all unbelievers. Why, sinner, by your rejection of Christ--the controversy between you and God, so far from being ended, is only made worse. Your guilt and final damnation are awfully aggravated, by your rejection of the mediatorial interference of Christ.

6. How infinitely foolish and mad are the saying and expectation of some, that if Christ has made an Atonement sufficient for all, that all will be saved, as a thing of course. Why, sinner, it would be just as reasonable, if you were starving, and invited to a feast, to which you obstinately refused to go, for you to affirm that the provision was ample, had actually been made, enough for all, so that no one need to famish with hunger; that therefore it mattered not whether you went to the feast or not. Why, sinner! are you crazy? Can it be possible, that the mediatorial work of Christ will save you without your own consent? Surely it cannot be. It is virtually and for ever impossible.

7. From this subject you see the wickedness and danger of delay. Sinner, God urges now upon you the obligation and necessity of instantly deciding, whether you will consent to this plan of salvation or not. This may be the last opportunity you will ever have, to make your salvation sure. Now what do you say? Do you call heaven and earth to witness, and to record on your soul, that you now, in the presence of God, of angels, and of men, from the inmost recesses of your being, consent to the mediatorial work of Christ, and accept the conditions of salvation? Do you so decide? And is the response of your heart, "So help me God!"

8. From this subject we can see the meaning of the context, which has been in some instances, much perverted. The apostle begins the chapter by saying: "I exhort, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority: that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

From this passage it has been inferred by some, that all men will inevitably be saved. But the plain meaning of this passage, when taken together, is, that God desires the salvation of all men. The word rendered will, may with equal propriety be rendered desire, as it often is. God really desires the salvation of all men, as a thing desirable in itself; and has therefore set forth his Son to be a mediator



between Himself and mankind in general, "who has given Himself a ransom for all, to be testified (or, as in the original, a testimony or witness,) in due time." He was given as a witness or testimony of the righteousness and infinite love of God to dying men, "So that God may be just and still justify him that believeth in Jesus."

Now, sinner, you have before you as condensed and simple an exhibition of the gospel as I can give you in one discourse. Will you accept it, or do you reject it? "I call heaven and earth to record this day upon your soul, that I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." Therefore, choose this day, and O, choose life, that you may live!

And Christian, do you see your privilege? Do you see your obligation to Christ? Do you see your dependence upon Him? Do you understand your security in Him? Why you are to ask in his name? Why you are to approach God through Him? Do you understand the gospel? Then cleave to the Mediator, that the river of life may flow continually through your soul!

## 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)*.

**End of the 1841 Collection.**