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# "The Oberlin Evangelist"

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by

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GLOSSARY

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

## Mutual Confession of Faults, and Mutual Prayer

Lecture I

January 17, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--James 5:16: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

In the present discourse the following points demand our attention.

*I. What is intended by the injunction, "Confess your faults one to another"?*

*II. What is implied in compliance with it?*

*III. The reasons for this injunction.*

*IV. What is intended by the injunction, "Pray one for another"?*

### **I. What is meant by the injunction, "confess your faults one to another"?**

- 1. There is no reason for supposing that this text gives any countenance to the Roman Catholic doctrine of confession to priests. You understand the doctrine so long prevalent in that communion under the name of "auricular confession," so called because it was made in the private ear of the priest. This doctrine holds that all are bound to make auricular confession of every act and of every thought upon which their conscience is at all troubled. Consequently the system makes the priest the repository of all the sins of the church--of all the most private sins of all its members, male or female, to be confessed on pain of damnation. Every one who is acquainted with the results of this system, knows that they have been naturally pernicious to the purity and morals of both priest and people. It is most manifest that the apostle did not contemplate and could never sanction such a system. Confessing faults one to another is not the same thing as confessing all faults to the priest only.
- 2. Although there is nothing in the text which specially defines the sins contemplated, yet we are doubtless to understand the apostle here to infer primarily to faults committed against others, and to enjoin the confession of faults to those whom we have injured. The doctrine of

confession in this form is abundantly taught and implied in the scripture, and is therefore, we may suppose, the particular thing intended here.

The principle involved in this may however extend somewhat farther, namely,

- (1.) to the confession or disclosure of our besetting sins and of our peculiar temptations and weaknesses. It is plain that by making our confidential Christian friends acquainted with these temptations and besetments of ours, we may enlist their sympathies and prayers in our behalf, and thus secure valuable aid in resisting and overcoming these temptations.
- (2.) The principle of the text may also include those sins which though not properly committed against particular individuals, are yet naturally committed in the presence of others, and therefore become a scandal to religion and a stumbling-block to our associates. For example, irritability, which so often stumbles others, and becomes a besetting sin; censoriousness--the practice of speaking harshly of others, and which is often a sore grievance not merely to those against whom we speak evil, but against every benevolent mind that hears us. These and other sins of this class it is plain should be confessed.

In saying these things you will observe I do not say that men are bound to reveal every thing they know--all the sins of which they think themselves guilty--even such as are known to none but themselves and God. It does not appear that the Bible makes the duty of confession to men thus universal.

## **II. What is implied in obeying this injunction?**

- 1. That we are thoroughly convinced of our sin; that we not only admit the fact, but its wickedness, as a sin against God and our neighbor. It is one thing for a man to confess his fault as a real fault and a sin; and quite another to acknowledge the fact without recognizing its heinous guilt. Hence our text must imply that we really understand and sincerely confess the actual guilt of our sin.
- 2. That we repent and renounce our sin. Confession is no better than an insult to God and man if unaccompanied with repentance and renunciation of sin confessed.
- 3. Humility is also implied. By this is meant that disposition which loves to take its own place, though it be a very low place--which does not seek to palliate, but really unmask one's self and naturally seeks the very place which seems to belong to us.

Commonly the great difficulty found in confessing is that men are too proud. They do not love to place themselves as low in the estimation of others as they ought to be. Now humility stands right over against this pride, and implies a willingness to come down to its own low place.

A forced and extorted confession is not the thing enjoined in the text. When a man

confesses under the sting of a scorpion conscience, or because, convicted by public disclosures and confounded by appalling revelations, he can not do otherwise and yet maintain any show of Christianity--such confessions, though they may cost a proud man a prodigious struggle, are yet in real value exceedingly cheap.

- 4. Genuine confession implies readiness to make restitution for the wrong we have done. Indeed confession is in one sense an element of restitution--a part of restitution itself; for example, if you have injured your neighbor in property or in reputation,--to make confession of the fact is one step in the process of restitution. But it is by no means the whole. If the case involve property, you must make restitution in kind; if it involve reputation of person, you are bound to make restitution as far as you can. This is really implied in the spirit of this injunction. No man in his right mind could suppose that if he had stolen, his confession would be worth a straw without ample restitution. And the same principle should certainly apply in all cases where restitution is possible.
- 5. It is implied that the confession be full and free, not scanty and constrained. Let it be made with a free, full, and honest heart, in such a spirit and manner as will satisfy the reasonable views of the injured party. How can we suppose that God will be satisfied with any thing less? Suppose you have wronged a man and he knows it, and feels it. You come to him and after a sort you confess; but instead of making a full and satisfactory confession, you merely hint at your wrong deeds. He knows that you are not an honest man, and that you have not even answered the demands of your own conscience. Such a confession can do neither yourself nor your neighbor any good. Confession therefore should be poured out free as water, full and thorough.
- 6. Legitimate confession implies and involves throwing yourself upon mercy. When persons thoroughly confess their sins to God, they cease to justify themselves before Him, and throw themselves entirely upon his mercy. They rest upon his clemency alone and leave themselves wholly in the hands of God. In a similar way, when you confess to man you throw yourself upon his clemency; you confess your wrong, and forego all pleas of justification.
- 7. Where persons confess their besetting sins, the act implies a sincere desire to be holy, and an honest determination to give up sin and be rid of it forever.

I have often been struck with the different manner in which different individuals hear the announcement of the doctrine of sanctification. Proclaim to a body of professed Christians the fact that through grace they may in this life be delivered from all sin, and the reception of it will often speak volumes in revealing their real character. It serves to show their precise attitude towards sin. For example, I once preached in Rochester on this subject, and no sooner had the congregation dispersed than one man came to me, saying with great earnestness--"Mr. Finney, that is too good news to be true." There was a minister in that audience, however, who did not regard it as good news at all. He did not seem to treat the doctrine as if he had any desire to have it true.

Who has not observed this very difference? Preach the doctrine of a present salvation from sin to a man really panting to be delivered from sin, and he will hail it with intense

interest, if not at once with open-hearted welcome. He will receive it most readily if he thinks it may be true. He will long to have it prove true, and his heart will throw no obstacles in the way of his candidly investigating its evidence, and cordially embracing all that evidence can be found to sustain.

But if he does not want it to prove true, he will cavil against it bitterly--will repel its evidence stubbornly, and of course will be likely to reveal himself unconsciously as the enemy of all righteousness. He will show that he takes no interest in being made free from sin at present--no real interest in being free from sin ever.

These developments of character are vastly better testimony to one's real state of mind than can elsewhere be given. No man ever yet caviled against this doctrine who in heart longed to become holy. Even if he does not believe the doctrine true, and hence feels constrained to oppose it, there will be no spirit of cavil. When you see men cavil at any doctrine, you may know they do not want it to be true. It is not congenial to their hearts.

Who does not know that the doctrine of entire sanctification has of late received a great deal of opposition under a pretense of zeal for the truth, and opposition to error, which after all has been nothing more nor less before God and the whole world than a mere spirit of caviling and a most manifest opposition to truth and disinclination to have that doctrine proved true? It has been mournful and appalling to notice the exhibition of real opposition to holiness which has manifested itself in many quarters within the last few years. I am sure I do not say this censoriously. It is what every body knows to be true who has kept his eye open to the real manifestations which have been made through the pulpit and the press, through ecclesiastical organizations and in many other ways against the doctrine of holiness in this life.

But to return. When Christians reveal their deep sin to their brethren, it is always implied that they are really panting after holiness--that they abhor these sins which they confess, and are ready to do any thing however humiliating to mortify these horrible sins they so much hate.

### **III. Reasons for the injunction, "Confess your faults to one another."**

- 1. In respect to personal injuries inflicted upon others, the injunction is founded in justice. We can not be just towards our injured brother without it.

Again, it is indispensable to peace with God. It is naturally impossible that we can have peace with God without confession of known offences against our neighbor. Who needs be told that God can have no fellowship with injustice, and of course none with those who act unjustly! Does not his eye mark all iniquity? Your injured neighbor might come before the Lord and say--"Lord, he has wronged me, Thou knowest, and now wilt Thou hold fellowship with him?"

- 2. Confession is just as indispensable to peace of mind as it is to peace with God. Suppose all the world were at peace with us and if it were possible, suppose God were too; yet we could not

persuade ourselves that we are right. Conscience will forever upbraid us until we confess and do all we possibly can under the circumstances to make restitution for our wrong deeds.

- 3. Confession is indispensable to peace with those whom we have injured. Although the injured man may have no ill-will towards us--no spirit inconsistent with the gospel--no disposition to retaliate; yet it is impossible that he should have the spirit of Christian sympathy and harmony with us so long as he knows us to be impenitent and unwilling to confess known wrongs. This is a difficulty--a barrier between us,--which can not be removed until he is satisfied that I am honest; and this satisfaction he can not have till I confess my fault.
- 4. Confession is indispensable to peace and sympathy with all the just and good. While it is true that neither God nor the injured party can be at peace with the wrong-doer till he confess, the same is equally true of all holy beings. Their minds can not be in a peaceful and harmonious state towards me while they know that I am guilty of wrong-doing and will not confess. So long as they know me to be in this state they must regard me as a transgressor, and this must create an everlasting barrier between me and them. They may have no disposition to retaliate or injure me, but on the contrary they may be most earnest in prayer for me that God would humble me and break down my pride. Their position towards me may be no other than that of true benevolence; yet till I confess they can not be in Christian sympathy and friendship with me. The thing is naturally impossible.

The same is true of even the wicked. They can not be at peace with me till I confess my wrongs. It is remarkable that a wicked man as really condemns wrongdoing as a good man does, although he may do the very same thing himself. His moral decisions upon the right and the wrong may be just and truthful notwithstanding his own bad character. Let him have a case in which his own selfishness does not bribe his conscience and blind his intelligence, and he will decide that wrong is wrong, and ought to be confessed and put away. You can not therefore have the respect of even wicked men unless you will confess your known wrongs. Even the wickedest men or devils in hell can not be satisfied with your course as right till you confess. They might not love you if you were to become holy, but certainly they never can esteem you until you do--never till you confess and abandon all your known wrong-doings. They can never justify and approve your sins.

- 5. Confession of wrong is indispensable to self-respect. It is naturally impossible that you should respect yourself while you withhold proper confession of your sins. By the very laws of your moral nature this can never be. Who does not know this? If you do not know this, you certainly may know it. Surely you can get no good by resisting the claims of an enlightened conscience, for if all the universe should let you alone in your sin, your conscience would not and could not. Still its voice would ring in your ear, and you could not silence its upbraidings.

Have you not sometimes been ashamed of yourself because you were too proud to confess? This very shame of making confession has filled your soul with bitter agony and the keenest self-reproach and you have sometimes felt that it is a greater shame and a deeper guilt than the original wrong itself. Suppose you were to meet the very man whom you have wronged. The best opportunity is afforded to make the confession which you know to be due--but shame and pride seal your lips. Not a word of confession is lisped.

You go away full of remorse and a sense of guilty shame, for you can scarcely help feeling that the last sin is worse than the first. As a physician under these circumstances once cried out--"O how full of hell I am!" So you perhaps are sometimes constrained to say. You know that this which you experience in your soul is an earnest of hell, for you are but too sure that you deserve the deepest, darkest place in the dwellings of the damned.

Nobody else can have confidence in you or respect for you, so long as it is understood that you will not confess known wrongs. You may labor to restore yourself in their confidence--but you are doomed to labor in vain. You may think to live it down, and wash out by good deeds the foul stain attaching to you by reason of unconfessed bad deeds, but you will certainly toil to no purpose. Who can think you an honest man? The truth is, they know better; for you have given them the best possible evidence of your being supremely proud and selfish. Put on the air of the saint as much as you will, you can not make them confide in you as an honest Christian man, until you confess your sins wherever confession is in the nature of the case, fit and demanded.

Consider, farther, that you can never regain the confidence of discerning men until you are willing to go farther in confession than you are absolutely compelled to go. It often happens that men will go as far as they must, but no farther. They show plainly enough that they go along in the path of confession, only because they are so pushed that they can not help it. Step by step--one step at a time, just as fast as they must, but no faster, they move along. I have often stood and looked on with astonishment to see this singular process. The guilty man finds that one thing is out too far to be denied any longer; so he confesses that;--but nothing more. No, he says, that's all. Soon another feature of the same transaction comes out, blacker than the first. Sir, you are guilty of this too! No, I am not. You can not prove it. Yes, my friend, it is proved beyond all question. O, well then, I confess that I am very sorry; but that's all. There is nothing more. Well, by the next day some new point is brought up, and the same road is traveled over again. Denial, conviction, confession--and then to save all the rest of his character, he will beg you to accept his solemn word that there is nothing more of the sort to be revealed. Now such a man often uses up his character faster than he is aware. He little thinks how cheap his forced confessions become, and how little confidence is reposed in his most solemn protestations of having made clean work in confession. It is vastly better to go to the bottom in the outset. Yes, go to the bottom--pour it all out--all, so thoroughly that neither man nor God can find anything more belonging to that subject. Do this, and there is hope for you. Men will say of you--Now we know he is honest-hearted, and though he has done wrong, yet he lays his heart all open and we can trust him again. It is not in human nature to resist the appeal which earnest, honest-hearted confession makes to the human heart.

Again, confession of personal wrongs is exceedingly useful to both parties concerned. It greatly relieves the guilty man, rolling off a mountain-weight from his soul, and restoring sweet peace and joy again. On the other side it often seems to be necessary to the party wronged. You will recollect a case which I adduced not long since, of Dr. Hopkins,

whose deep and full-hearted confessions were the means of converting his wicked brother-in-law. Confessions will often do what nothing else can. It often serves to show wicked men that Christians are in spirit utterly unlike themselves. They are conscious that they do not confess their faults so--that they know nothing about such brokenness of spirit. Hence the confessions of a humble Christian reach their conscience, as nothing else can. Often have I known men scatter conviction like fire through a congregation by a simple confession of their own sins. I now recollect the case of a minister who by a confession to his people set on foot a glorious revival. He had been to Rome during the great revival there, and become deeply convicted of his great guilt in having cared so little for the salvation of his people. He returned home, prepared a sermon for his people, but when he entered the pulpit the next Sabbath, he could not preach it. His heart was full, and ready to burst, and he told the people that he could not preach a word. O, said he, I have been among you so many years, and alas! how little have I cared for your souls! I have tried to please you, and have discharged my regular duties in a way but too heartless; but ah, my guilt in having so overlooked the salvation of your dying souls. Well, he had scarcely begun to confess in this strain, before the deacon wanted to confess, and then other members of the church, and that house became another Bochim. The Lord was there, and his work moved on with power. You can readily see the bearing of that minister's confession. Every one said--If our minister has sins to confess, so have we! If he has reason to confess with such contrition and bitter weeping, how much more reason have we! Thus his confessions effected what no sermon of his ever did.

Again, sincere confessions are highly honorable to the party who makes them. There is perhaps no other way in which men evince more strongly their earnest and sincere approval of the right. It is surely no small testimony to the integrity of a man's character, if he shows that he approves the right so fully and strongly that he does not shrink a moment from condemning himself for any known deviation. His love of right prevails over his pride of character. This man's confessions are a noble testimony to his deep sincerity of heart.

How strange it is that men should be ashamed to confess their sins! They could not make this great mistake if they did not "put darkness for light and light for darkness." Is it not most honorable for a man who has done wrong to make restitution--for a man who has sinned to make a full and free confession? How strange that men should be afraid to confess! They might as well be ashamed to expose their honesty--ashamed to let the world see that they approve the right more than they value an undeserved reputation--a reputation for being what they are not.

- 6. Confessions serve to unburden the mind of the injured man, and lead him to exercise forgiveness. Injuries inflicted especially by professed Christians, often become great snares and temptations. Many are overcome by them, fall into a bad state of mind, in which divine truth and grace seem to have no good influence on their hearts. They know, perhaps, that it is wrong for them to indulge such feelings, but they have been sorely abused, they say--and by a professed Christian, too, and they do not find it easy to divest their minds of the impression thus made. Now in such cases, an honest confession by the offending party is the natural remedy. It usually does more to remove that dreadful stumbling-block than any thing, or every thing else.



Christian reader, is any sinner stumbled thus with any sin of yours? Take care that you do not ensnare his soul to his ruin. Take care that the blood of his murdered soul be not found on your skirts!

I have sometimes known one man provoke another till he had made him angry, and then reproach him for this very anger, instead of reproaching himself or having caused it. This is cruelly wicked. The man who has thus provoked another to anger, ought to humble himself to most thorough confession, and say--"I have most meanly tempted you to sin, and then reproached you for yielding to my temptation--when I ought to have most reproached myself. I am sorry. I deplore and condemn my own wickedness."

You may perhaps recollect a case in which it is said that a man who was opposing Wesley's views of Sanctification, and who wanted to prove that a certain believer in those views was not perfectly sanctified, went and took a wash-bowl of filthy water, and threw it into his face. Now we will suppose that the injured man took offence and got angry, and seeing this, the offending party exults, and says--"Fine sanctification this--to get angry on so slight a provocation!"

But mark how ineffably mean and wicked is the course of this tempter to sin. Let him break down and confess his own sin with shame. Let him say--I have been the guilty wretch in this matter! Let him do this, and repentance would flow freely from both their hearts.

Again, confession tends strongly to secure the prayers of those against whom you have sinned, and to whom you confess. Nothing tends more strongly to beget instantly the spirit of prayer in your behalf. How naturally they cry out--"O Lord, forgive the man, for he confesses his wrong; forgive all his sins and show him the light of thy face." The confession of our besetting sins otherwise than to an injured party, and for the purpose of getting aid to overcome them, is exceedingly useful. It usually interests our Christian brethren very much in our behalf. Who does not know how powerfully the heart is drawn out to pray for those who in this manner confess their besetting sins? Have not you had some experience of this?

#### **IV. What is meant by praying one for another is easily understood in this connection.**

It implies that we interest ourselves deeply in the spiritual welfare of those who confess their faults, and use our influence with God to secure their pardon. It is as if we were to sign a petition for their acquittal from the sentence of a broken law. Suppose your neighbor has broken the law of the State, and being convicted, is sent to State's prison for life; but he repents most deeply--gives evidence that he is a changed man, and now a petition for his pardon is laid before you for your name. Will you join in the prayer? Will you say--Does he confess his sin? If he does, I can pray for his pardon.

So when men confess their sins to God and to men, you should pray God to forgive them. God requires you to do it.

#### **V. Obedience to this requirement implies a real spirit of forgiveness--a desire that God should**

**forgive and an expression of this desire in real prayer to God.**

This is too obvious to need illustration.

In the case where besetting sins are confessed, it is implied that we interest ourselves in their sanctification and pray earnestly to God for this great result.

**REMARKS.**

1. Wrongs committed against the public should be confessed publicly. Of this no one can have any doubt. If confession should be made at all, it should be made to those against whom the sin is committed.
2. Wrongs against individuals may be committed either publicly or privately, and in either case the confession should correspond to the manner and publicity of the offence. If any man injures another in the public estimation, by writing a libel against him, or preaching libel against him, the sin is public, and manifestly confession of it should be co-extensive with the extent of the offence. You are bound to make the retraction as broad as the wrong done, if you can.
3. You may see why many persons never overcome their besetting sins. They are never humble and ingenuous enough to confess them, and pour out their hearts before their brethren, so as to secure their sympathy and prayers in their own behalf. They never take advantage of the great moral lever which confession puts under a man's giant sins to dig them up and roll them out and away for ever.
4. You may see the error of supposing that it is enough to confess to God, and that confession to man is useless and not required. The Catholic doctrine of confession has driven many Protestants to the opposite extreme, so that many churches are opposed to having any confessions at all made before men. But it does not follow at all that because Catholics have abused the doctrine of confession, therefore it should be all cast away. It does not follow that we are not under obligation to confess to those whom we have injured. By no means. If this principle were a just one, we should soon lose all our Bibles.
5. I have often known persons labor a long time under a load of sins unknown to others, and sins which there might have been no need of confessing, but for their great pride. But God saw that their pride must be humbled, and he could not give peace to their souls until it was. Now let such a man go to those whose good opinion he most values, and confess his sins; let him really take up his cross in this thing, and spare not his proud heart at all; he will find it a most excellent antidote. I have often seen this done. A man goes to some person whom he esteems very highly and says--I am ensnared by my pride--it is dragging me away from God, down to hell, and I am determined it shall be subdued. So he pours out his confession of sin.

Now this is seizing the great club to crush the serpent's head--the head of cursed pride--and it is commonly successful.

6. When in a case of personal fault both parties are to blame, one should never wait for the other to

begin the confessions. Let each hasten to be most hearty and full in his own confession--then a right spirit will obtain, and each will provoke the other to good. It often happens that one holds back lest the other should make a bad use of his confessions. No matter if he does. I mean comparatively speaking it is no matter, worth a moments' regard. It is infinitely more important that you should do what is right before God, the world, and the man you have injured, than that you should withhold confession to prevent him from abusing it. Besides this there is little danger of his doing it. If he does, the responsibility is his alone.

In a case of this sort, I once knew a man who said--I will confess my wrong, and if my neighbor does not choose to confess his, or pleases to make a bad use of what I confess, he must bear the responsibility alone. He poured out his confessions like water, found sweet relief and peace of soul--soon after died; that neighbor and every enemy he had, mourned over his ashes in bitterness, and confessed that there had lived at least one good man.

I have known the case of a church involved in great difficulty, pitted against each other with strong prejudices and party feelings; but ultimately the spirit of confession began to prevail; each man felt himself more to blame than his neighbor, and now the only strife was to see which should confess first and most. The controversy now was not to prove each that his neighbor was in fault, but that himself had been the chief sinner and had been the great cause both of his own sins and of his neighbor's. Every man was ready to take his hand off from his neighbor and lay it on himself. This was good. If you could have seen those humbled, confessing Christians, you would have said, it is good to come down, and get the spirit of confession.

Under such circumstances mutual confession seems to be the only thing that can save Christian character and save the church. When men have done wrong they must come down and confess their faults one to another. To see two brethren meet in the spirit of mutual confession, forgiveness and prayer is a blessed sight. God rejoices in it and every holy angel strikes a fresh note of joy and praise in heaven. It is one of the loveliest scenes ever known on earth.

Prayer offered in such circumstances is specially prevalent. Suppose you had been wronged--the wrong-doer is prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced--but in process of time becoming penitent, you are ready to forgive him and you send up your petition to the Executive for his pardon. Now who does not know that your name will have ten fold more weight because of your peculiar relation to that crime?

So it was in the case of Job and his three friends. They had spoken unkindly of him and there was good reason for their asking his forgiveness. God's wrath was kindled against them, What did he say? "Go," said he, "to my servant Job--my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept." They had accused Job of being a hypocrite. Now let them make up the matter with Job and obtain his intercessions with the Lord in their behalf and they can be forgiven. He of all others is the man to pray for them. God can hear him.

Have you wronged a brother? Go, make your confession to him, and beg his prayers in your behalf. He is the man to pray for you. God can hear him. Humble yourself at his feet till he can feel a spirit of faith to pray for you; then you may hope for prayer that will avail before the Lord.

O, said a dying slaveholder, how can I die here on my bed and have no prayer offered up for my guilty soul? What shall I do? said his sympathizing wife--shall I send for the minister? No, no, said the dying man; send for my slave Tom. I have heard him pray in my barn many a time--send for him. Tom came softly in--dropped his hat under his arm--walked towards the bed;--what does Massa want? I want you Tom to pray for your dying Master, I have wronged you and robbed you of your liberty these many hears; I am sorry--O if I could live to reward you--but if you can pray for a poor lost sinner, do pray! And who would not rather have the prayers of the man he had enslaved and wronged than the prayers of all other men on earth. Such a prayer is worth a world of other prayers! But how can you have it without confession?

## **God's Anger Against the Wicked**

Lecture II

January 31, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Psa. 7:11: "God is angry with the wicked every day."

In speaking from this text I design to show briefly,

*I. Who are wicked in the scripture sense of this term;*

*II. That God is angry with them;*

*III. The nature of this anger;*

*IV. The reasons for it;*

*V. Its degree;*

*VI. Its duration;*

*VII. The terrible condition of sinners under it.*

**I. The Bible divides all the human race into two classes only; the righteous and the wicked.**

Those are righteous who have true faith in Christ, whose spirit is consecrated to God, who live a

heavenly life on earth, and who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. Their original selfishness is subdued and slain, and they live a new life through the ever present grace of Christ Jesus.

Right over against them in character are the wicked, who have not been renewed in heart--who live in selfishness, under the dominion of appetite in some of its forms, and it matters not in which out of all possible forms, it may be; but self is the great and only ultimate end of their life; these are in the scriptural sense, the wicked.

## **II. God is angry with the wicked. Our text explicitly affirms this.**

The same truth is affirmed and implied in numerous other passages. Let the sinner remember that this is the testimony of God Himself. Who should better know the feelings of God towards sinners than God Himself does? Who on this point can gainsay what God affirms?

But this truth is also taught by reason. Every man in the exercise of his reason knows it ought to be true. If God were not opposed to the wicked, He would be wicked Himself for not opposing them. What would you think of a judge who did not hate and oppose law-breakers? Would you think him an honest man if he did not take sides against transgressors? Everybody knows that this is the dictate of reason and of common sense. Sinners know this, and always assume it in their practical judgments. They know that God is angry with them, and ought to be--though they may not realize it. Sinners know many things which they do not realize. For instance, you who are in sin know that you must die; but you have more reason to be assured that God is angry with you than you have to be sure that you must die; for it is not necessarily so certain that you will die as it is that God is angry with you for your sin. God may possibly translate you from this world to another without your death--as He has some others; but there never was and never can be any exception to the universal law of His anger against all the wicked. You know this therefore with an absolute certainty which precludes all possibility of rations doubt.

Sinners do know this, and I have said, and always assume it in their practical judgments. Else why are they afraid to die--why afraid to meet God face to face in the world of retribution? Would they have this fear if they did not know that God is angry with them for their sin? It would be gratuitous therefore to prove this truth to the sinner; he already knows it--knows it not only as a thing that is, but as what ought to be.

## **III. The nature of this anger demands our attention. On this point it is important to notice negatively,**

- 1. It is not a malicious anger. God is never malicious; never has a disposition to do any wrong in any way--to any being. He is infinitely far from such feelings, and from any such developments of anger.
- 2. His anger is not passion in the sense in which men are wont to exhibit passion in anger. You may often have seen men whose sensibility is lashed into fury under an excitement of anger; their very souls seem to be boiling with fermentation, so intense is their excitement. Reason for the time is displaced, and passion reigns. Now God is never angry in such a way. His anger against the wicked involves no such excitement of passion.

- 3. God's anger can not be in any sense a selfish anger; for God is not selfish in the least degree, but infinitely the reverse of it. Of course His anger against the wicked must be entirely devoid of selfishness.

In our attempts to conceive of the mental faculties of the divine mind, we are under a sort of necessity of reasoning analogically from our own minds. Revelation has told us that we are "made in the image of God." Of course the mind of God is the antetype from which ours was cast. The great constituent elements of mind we must suppose are therefore alike in both the infinite and the finite. As we have intellect, sensibility, and will, so has God.

From our own minds moreover we infer not only what the faculties of the divine mind are, but also the laws under which they act. We know that in the presence of certain objects we naturally feel strong opposition. Those objects are so related to our sensibility that anger and indignation are the natural result. We could not act according to the fixed laws of our own minds if we did not utterly disapprove wrong-doing, and if our disapproval of it moreover did not awaken some real sensibility in the form of displeasure and indignation against the wrong-doer.

Some suppose that these results of the excited sensibility against wrong would not develop themselves if our hearts were right. This is a great mistake. The nearer right our hearts are, the more certainly shall we disapprove wrong, the more intensely shall we feel opposed to it, and the greater will be our displeasure against the wrong-doer. Hence we must not only suppose that God is angry in the sense of a will opposed to sin, but in the further sense of a sensibility enkindled against it. This must be the case if God is truly a moral agent.

- 4. God is not angry merely against the sin abstracted from the sinner, but against the sinner himself. Some persons have labored hard to set up this ridiculous and absurd abstraction, and would fain make it appear that God is angry at the sin yet not at the sinner. He hates the theft, but loves the thief. He abhors adultery, but is pleased with the adulterer. Now this is supreme non-sense. The sin has not moral character apart from the sinner. The act is nothing apart from the actor. The very thing that God hates and disapproves is not the mere event--the thing done in distinction from the doer; but it is the doer himself. It grieves and displeases Him that a rational moral agent, under His government, should array himself against his own God and Father, against all that is right and just in the universe. This is the thing that offends God. The sinner himself is the direct and the only object of His anger.

So the Bible shows. God is angry with the wicked--not with the abstract sin. If the wicked turn not, God will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow and made it ready; not to shoot the sin however, but the sinner--the wicked man who has done the abominable thing. This is the only doctrine of either the Bible or of common sense on this subject.

- 5. The anger of God against the wicked implies all that properly belongs to anger when it exists with good reason. We know by our own experience that when we are angry with good reason,

we have strong opposition of will and also strong feelings of displeasure and disapprobation against the wrong-doers. Hence we may infer that the same is true of God under the same circumstances.

#### **IV. The reasons of God's anger against the wicked next demand our attention.**

His anger is never excited without good reasons. Causeless anger is always sinful. "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment." God never Himself violates His own laws--founded as they are in infinite right and justice. Hence God's anger always has good reasons.

Good reasons exist for His anger, and He is angry for those reasons. It is not uncommon for persons to be angry, under circumstances too, which are good reasons for anger, but still they are not angry for those good reasons, but for other reasons which are not good. For example, every sinner has good reasons for being angry with every other sinner for his wickedness against God. But sinners are not angry against other sinners for those reasons. Although these reasons actually exist, yet when angry at sinners, it is not for these good reasons, but for some selfish reasons which are not good. This is a common case. You see persons angry, and if you reprove them for their anger as sinful, they seek to justify themselves by affirming that they are angry with the man for his sins--for his wrong-doing against God. Now this is indeed a good and sufficient reason for anger, and the justification would be a good one if the anger were really excited by this cause. But often, although this reason exists, and is pleaded by the man as his excuse for anger, yet it is not excuse, for in fact he is not angry for this cause, but has some selfish reason for his anger. Not so with God. God is angry with the wicked not irrespective of his sins, but for his sins.

- 1. Wicked men are entirely unreasonable. Their conduct is at war with all reason and with all right. God has given them intelligence and conscience; but they act in opposition to both. God has given them a pure and good law, yet this they recklessly violate. Hence their conduct is in every point of view utterly unreasonable.

Now we all know that by a fixed law of our being nothing can be a greater temptation to anger than to see persons act unreasonably. This is one of the greatest trials that can occur, and one of the strongest incentives to anger. So when God looks at the unreasonable conduct of sinners He feels the strongest indignation and displeasure. If they were not rational beings endowed with reason, no anger would be awakened and called forth; but since God knows them to be endowed with reason and to be capable of true and noble-hearted obedience, He cannot fail of being displeased with their transgression.

- 2. The course of the wicked is utterly ruinous. No thanks to the sinner if his influence does not ruin the whole world. By the very laws of mind, the sin of any one man tends to influence other men to sin, and they spread far and wide the dreadful contagion of his example. It may truly be said that the sinner does the worst thing possible to him to ruin the universe. He sets the example of rebellion against the supreme government of all worlds. And what influence can be more potent than that of example? What worse thing therefore can the sinner do to destroy all good than he is doing by his sin? No thanks to him if every man who sees his sin does not imitate it to his own ruin, and throw the power of his own example broad-cast over all his

associates. No thanks to any sinner if his own influence for ruin does not run like fire on the prairies over all the world, and then over every other world of moral beings in the universe of God.

Think of the father of a family, living in his sins and exerting his great influence over his household to make them all as wicked as himself. Who can estimate the power of his influence over his wife and his children? Does he pray with them and seek to lead them to God? No; his example is prayerless. It proclaims every day to his family -- "You have no occasion at all to pray. You see I can live without prayer." Does he read the Bible to them or with them? No; his constant example before them sets the Bible at naught, and continually suggests that they will be as well off without reading the Bible as with. His whole influence therefore is ruinous to the souls of his family. No thanks to him if they do not all go down to hell along with himself. If they do not scream around him with yells of mingled imprecation and despair, cursing him as the guilty author of their ruin, he will have other agencies to thank besides his own. Surely he has done what he well could do to secure results so dreadful as these. Has not God good reasons to be angry with him? Why not? Would not you feel that you have good reasons to be angry with a man who should come into your family to destroy its peace--to seduce your wife and daughters, and to entice your sons into some pathway of crime and ruin? Certainly you would. Now do not all families belong to God in a far higher sense than any mans' family belong to him? Why then has not God as good reasons for anger against a wicked father as you could have against a villain who should plot and seek to effect the mischief and ruin of your family? Is it wonderful to you that God should be angry with every wicked father? Just consider what that father is doing by his bare example--even supposing that his words are well-guarded and not particularly liable to objection. Who does not know that example is the very highest and strongest moral power? It does not need the help of teaching to make its power felt for terrible mischief. The prayerless husband and father! The devil could not do worse--nay, more, not so bad, for the devil never had mercy offered him--never stood related as this wicked father does, to offered pardon and to the glorious gospel. If then God would have good reason to be angry at the devil, much more has He for anger against this wicked father.

The same substantially is true of other classes of sinners. It is essential to their very course as sinners, that they are in rebellion against God, and are doing the very worst thing in the universe by drawing other moral beings into sin.

Again, God is so good and sinners are so wicked, He can not help being angry at them. If He were not angry at the wicked, He would be as much worse than they as He is wiser than they. Since in His wisdom and knowledge He knows more fully than they do, the great evil of sin; by so much the more is He under obligation to be displeased with sin and angry at the sinner. We sometimes hear men say, "God is too good to be angry at sinners." What do men mean by this language? Do they mean that God is too good to be opposed to all evil--too good to be displeased with all evil-doers? This were indeed a strange goodness! God too good to hate sin--too good to oppose sinners! What sort of goodness can this be?



- 3. I have sometimes heard men say that if God should be angry with sinners, He would be as bad as the devil himself. Now this is not only horrible language on the score of its blasphemy; but it is monstrous absurdity on the score of its logic. The amount of its logic is that God would be Himself wicked if He should be displeased at wickedness. So wrong it must be to hate the wrong-doer!! Pray who is it that holds such doctrine? Is it not possible that they feel some interest in sustaining wrong-doers even against God Himself.

Really there is no force, no plausibility even, in this language about the wrong of God's being angry at sinners, except what arises from misconceiving and misrepresenting the true idea of the divine anger in this case. If God's anger were in itself sinful--as is the case often with man's anger--then of course, nothing more can be said in its vindication. But since His anger is never sinful, never selfish, never malicious, never unholy or wrong in any degree whatever, nothing can be more false, nothing more sophistical, nothing more ungenerous and vile and Satanic than to imply that it is. But this is just what men do when they say that for God to be angry at sinners is to be Himself wicked.

The true view of this case is not by any means abstruse or difficult of apprehension. Who does not know that good men are by virtue of their goodness opposed to wicked men? Surely all wicked men know this well enough. Else why the fear they have of good and law-abiding men? Why do all horse-thieves and counterfeiters keep dark from good men--dread their presence--commonly feel a strong dislike to them and always dread their influence as hostile to their own wicked schemes?

So wicked men feel towards God. They know that His goodness places Him in hostile array against themselves. This fact seems to be implied in the Psalmist's expostulation--"Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually." God is always good; how can you be proud of your wickedness? God is too good and too constantly good to afford you any scope for sin--any ground of hope for peace with Him in your iniquity.

#### **V. The degree of God's anger against sin should be next considered.**

It is plain that the degree of God's anger against the wicked ought to be equal to the degree of their wickedness, and must be if God is what He should be. The times of heathen ignorance and darkness "God winked at"--the degree of their guilt being less by as much as their light is less than that of such cities as Chorazin and Bethsaida. God does not hold them innocent absolutely, but relatively they might almost be called innocent, compared with the great guilt of sinners in gospel lands. Against those who sin amid the clearest light, His anger must burn most intensely; for example, against sinners in this place and congregation. You may be outwardly a decent and moral man, respected and beloved by your friends; but if you are a selfish, impenitent sinner the pure and holy God loathes and abhors you. He sees more real guilt in you than in ten thousand of those dark-minded heathen who are bowing down to idol gods, and whose crimes you read of with loathing and disgust. Think of it. God may be more angry against you for your great wickedness than against a nation of idolaters whose ignorance He winks at, while He measures your light and consequent guilt in the balances of His own eternal justice. O are you living here amid the blazing sun-light of truth--knowing your duty every day and every day refusing to do it; do you not know that in the eye of God you are one of the wickedest

beings out of hell, or in hell either, and that God's hatred against your sin is equal to your great guilt? But you say perhaps, Am I not moral and honest? Suppose you are moral. For whose sake are you moral, and for what reason? Is it not for your reputation's sake only? The devil might be as moral for such a purpose as you are. Mark, it is not for God's sake, not for Christ's sake, that you are a moral man, but because you love yourself. You might be just as moral if there were no God, or if you were an atheist. Of course if so, you are saying in your heart let there be no fear of God before my eyes--no love of God in my heart. Let me live and have my own way as if there were no God. And all this you do not under the darkness of heathenism, but amid the broadest sun-light of heaven's truth blazing all around you. Do you still ask, What have I done? You have arrayed yourself against God, rejected the gospel of His Son, and done despite to the Spirit of His grace. What heathen has ever done this, or anything that could compare with this in guilt? The vilest heathen people that ever wallowed in the filth of their own abominations are pure compared with you. Do you start back and rebel against this view of your case? Then let us ask again, By what rule are we to estimate guilt? You pass along the street and you see the lower animals doing what you would be horrified to see human beings do, but you never think of them as guilty. You see those dogs try to tear each other to pieces; you will try perhaps to part them, but you will not think of feeling moral indignation or moral displeasure against them; and why? Because you instinctively judge of their guilt by their light, and by their capacity of governing themselves by light and reason. On nearly the same principle you might see the heathen reeking in their abominations, quarreling, and practicing the most loathsome forms of vice and selfishness--but their guilt is only a glimmering taper compared with yours, and therefore you can not but estimate their guilt as by so much less than your own as their light is less! Your reason demands that you should estimate guilt on this principle, and you know that you can not rightly estimate it on any other. For the very same reason you must conclude that God estimates guilt on the same principles, and that His anger against sin is in proportion to the sinners' guilt, estimated in view of the light he enjoys and sins against. The degree of God's anger against the wicked is not measured by their outward conduct, but by their real guilt as seen by Him whose eye is on the heart.

**VI. As to the duration of God's anger against the wicked, it manifestly must continue as long as the wickedness itself continues.**

As long as wicked men continue wicked, so long must God be angry at them every day. If they turn not, there can be no abatement, no cessation of His anger. This is so plain that everybody must know it.

**VII. The terrible condition of the sinner against whom God is angry.**

This dreadful truth that God is angry with the wicked every day, sinners know, but do not realize. Yet it were well for you who are sinners to apprehend and estimate this just as it is.

Look then at the attributes of God. Who and what is God? Is He not a Being whose wrath against you is to be dreaded? You often feel that it is a terrible thing to incur the displeasure of some men. Children are often exceedingly afraid of the anger of their parents. Any child has reason to feel that it is a terrible state of things, when he has done wrong and knows it must come to the knowledge of his father and his mother, and must arouse their keenest displeasure against himself--this is terrible, and no wonder a child should dread it. How much more has the sinner reason to fear and tremble when by

his sin he has made the Almighty God his enemy! Think of his state; think of the case of the sinner's exposing himself to the indignation of the great and dreadful God! Look at God's natural attributes. Who can measure the extent of His power? Who or what can resist His will? He taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and the nations before Him are only as the small dust of the balance. When His wrath is kindled, who can stand before it, or stay its dreadful fury?

Think also of His Omniscience. He knows all you have done. Every act has passed underneath His eye; and not every external act, merely, but what is far more dreadful to you, every motive lying back of every act--all the most hidden workings of your heart. O, if you were only dealing with some one whom you could deceive, how would you set yourself at work to plan some deep scheme of deception; but all in vain here, for God knows it all. If it were a case between yourself and some human tribunal you might cover up many things; you might perjure yourself, or might smuggle away the dreaded witnesses; but before God, no such measures can avail you for one moment. The whole truth will come out, dread its disclosure as much as you may. The darkness and the light are both alike to Him, and nothing can be hidden from His eye.

Again, not only does God know everything you have done, and not only is He abundantly able to punish you, but He is as much disposed as He is able, or omniscient. You will find He has no disposition to overlook your guilt. He is so good that He never can let sin unrepented of pass unnoticed and unpunished. It would be an infinite wrong to the universe if He should! If He were to do it, He would at once cease to be a good and holy God!

O, sinner, do you ever think of God's perfect holiness--the infinite purity of His heart! Do you ever think how intensely strong must be His opposition to your sin--to those sins of yours which are so bad even in your own view that you cannot bear to have many of your fellow men know them? How do you suppose your guilty soul appears in the eye of the pure and holy God?

You often hear of God's mercy. You hope for some good to yourself, perhaps, from this attribute of His nature. Ah, if you had not spurned it, and trampled it under your feet! If you had not slighted and abused its manifestations to you, it might befriend you in your day of need; but ah, how can you meet insulted mercy! What can you say for yourself in defense for having sinned against the richest mercy the world ever saw? Can you hope that God's injured mercy will befriend you? Nay, verily; God has not one attribute which is not armed against you. Such is His nature, and such is His character that you have nothing to hope, but everything to fear. His dreadful anger against you must be expressed. He may withhold its expression for a season to give the utmost scope for efforts to reclaim and save you; but when these efforts shall have failed, then will not justice take her course? Will not insulted Majesty utter her awful voice? Will not the infinite God arise in His awful purity, and proclaim--"I hate all wickedness, My anger burns against the sinner to the lowest hell"? Will not Jehovah take measures to make His true position towards sinners known?

## **REMARKS.**

1. God is much more opposed to sinners than Satan is. Doubtless this must be so, for Satan has no special reason for being opposed to sinners. They are doing his work very much as he would have them. We have no evidence that Satan is displeased with their course. But God is displeased with

them, and for the best of reasons.

Men sometimes say--"If God is angry with the wicked He is worse than Satan." They seem to think that Satan is a liberal, generous-hearted being. They are rather disposed to commend him as on the whole very charitable and noble-hearted. They may think that Satan is bad enough, but they can not be reconciled to it that God should be so hard on sinners.

Now the facts are that God is too good to be otherwise than angry with sinners. The devil is so bad himself that he finds no difficulty in being well enough pleased with their vileness. It does not offend him. Hence from His very nature God must hate the sinner infinitely more than Satan does.

2. If God were not angry with sinners, He would not be worthy of confidence. What would you think of a civil governor who should manifest no indignation against transgressors of the law? You would say of course that he had not the good of the community at heart, and you could have no confidence in him.

3. God's anger with sinners is not inconsistent with His happiness. Why should it be, if it is not inconsistent with His holiness? If there were anything wrong about it, then it would indeed destroy all His happiness; but if it be intrinsically right, then it not only can not destroy His happiness, but He could not be happy without anger against the wicked. His happiness must be conditioned upon His acting and feeling in accordance with the reality of things. Hence, if God did not hate sin and did not manifest His hatred in all proper ways, He could not respect Himself. He could not retire within the great deep of His own nature, and enjoy eternal bliss in the consciousness of infinite rectitude.

4. God's opposition to sinners is His glory. It is all-glorious to God to manifest His anger towards wicked men and devils. Is not this the fact with all good rulers? Do they not seize every opportunity to manifest their opposition to the wicked, and is not this their real glory? Do we not account it their glory to be zealous and efficient in detecting crime? Most certainly. They can have no other real glory. But suppose a ruler should sympathize with murderers, thieves, robbers. We should execrate his very name!

5. Saints love God for His opposition to sinners, not excepting even His opposition to their own sins. They could not have confidence in Him if He did not oppose their own sins, and it is not in their hearts to ask Him to favor even their own iniquities. No, where they come near Him, and see how He is opposed to their own sins, and to them on account of them, they honor Him and adore Him the more. They do not want any being in the universe to connive at their own sins, or to take any other stand towards themselves as sinners, than that of opposition.

6. This text is to be understood as it reads. Its language is to be taken in its obvious sense. Some have supposed that God is not really angry with sinners, but uses this language in accommodation to our understandings.

This is an unwarrantable latitude of interpretation. Suppose we should apply the same principle to what is said of God's love. When we read, "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son," suppose we say, this cannot mean real love, such as we feel for each other--no, nothing like this; the

language is only used by way of accommodation, and really has no particular sense whatever. This sort of interpretation would destroy the Bible, or any other book ever written. The only sound view of this matter is that God speaks as sensible men do--to be understood by the reader and hearer, and of course uses language in its most obvious sense. If He says He is angry against the wicked, we must suppose that He really is.

It is indeed true that we are to qualify the language as I have already shown by what we absolutely know of His real character, and therefore hence infer that this language cannot imply malicious anger, or selfish anger, or any forms of anger inconsistent with infinite benevolence. But having made the necessary qualifications, there are no more to be made, and the cardinal idea of anger still remains--a fixed eternal displeasure and opposition against all sinners because of their great guilt.

7. God's anger against the sinner does not exclude love--real, compassionate love. Not however the love of complacency, but the love of well-wishing and good-willing; not the love of him as a sinner, but the love for him as a sentient being who might be infinitely happy in obedience to his God. This is undoubtedly the true view to be taken of God's attitude towards sinners. What parent does not know what this is? You have felt the kindlings of indignation against the wickedness of your child, but blended with this you have also felt all the compassionate tenderness of a parent's heart.

The sinner sometimes says--"It can not be that God is angry with me, for He watches over me day by day; He feeds me from His table, and regales me with His bounties." Ah sinner, you may be greatly mistaken in this matter. Don't deceive yourself. God is slow to anger indeed: that is, He is slow to give expression to His anger, and Himself assigns the reason,--because He is long-suffering towards sinners, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But take care that you do not misconceive His real feelings towards you. Beware lest you misinterpret His great forbearance. He waits, I know; but the storm of vengeance is gathering. How soon He may come forth out of His place and unlock suddenly all the whirlwinds of His vengeance! Ah sinner, this once done, they will sleep no more!

8. It is plain that sinners do not realize God's anger, though they know it. If they do both know and realize it, they manifest a degree of hardihood in iniquity which is dreadful. But the fact is, they keep the thought of God's anger from their minds. They are reckless about it, and treat it as they do death. Sinners know they must die, but they do not realize this fact. They do not love to sit down and commune with death--thinking how soon it may come, how certainly it will come--how the grave-worms will gnaw the flesh from their cheek-bones, and consume those eyes now bright and sparkling. These young ladies don't love to commune with such thoughts as these, and realize how soon these scenes will be realities.

So you don't love to think of God's anger against sin; of His reasons for His anger, and of His great provocations. You probably don't like to hear me preach about it, and yet I preach as mildly as I can. You can't bear to hear the subject brought forward and pressed upon your attention. Tell me, are you in the habit of sitting down and considering this subject attentively? If you were to do so, you could not contemn God and treat Him as if you had no care for Him.

9. Are you aware sinner, that you have made God your enemy, and have you thought how terrible a

thing this is? Do you consider how impotent you are to withstand God? If you were in any measure dependent on any one of your fellow men you would not like to make him your enemy. The student in this college is careful not to make the faculty, or any one of them his enemy. The child has the same solicitude in regard to his parent. Now consider what you are doing towards God--that God who holds your breath in His hands--your very life in His power. Let Him only withdraw His hand and you sink to hell by your own gravity. On a slippery steep you stand, and the billows of damnation roll below! O sinner, are you aware that when you lie down at night with your weapons of rebellion against God in your very hands, His blazing eye is on you--are you well aware of this?

You may recollect the case of a Mr. H. once a student here. For a considerable time he had been rebellious against the truth of God as presented here to his mind, and this spirit of rebellion rose gradually to a higher and yet higher pitch. It seemed to have made about as much head as he could well bear, and in this state he retired to bed, and extinguished his light. All at once his room seemed full of dazzling splendor--he gazed around--there stood before him a glorious form--with eyes of unearthly and most searching power; gradually all else disappeared save one eye which shone with indescribable brilliancy and seemed to search him through and through. The impression made on his mind was awful. O, said he, I could not have lived under it many minutes if I had not yielded and bowed in submission to the will of God.

Sinner, have you ever considered that God's searching eye is on you? Do you think of it whenever you lie down at night? If you should live so long and should lie down again on your bed, think of it then. Write it down on a little card and hang it where it will most often catch your eye--"Thou, God, seest me." Do this; and then realize that God's eye is penetrating your very heart. O that searching, awful eye! You close your eyes to sleep--still God's eye is on you. It closes not for the darkness of night. Do you say, "I shall sleep as usual--I am not the sinner who will be kept awake through fear of God's wrath--Why should I be afraid of God? What have I to fear? I know indeed that God says 'Give Me thine heart,' but I have no thought of doing it. I have disobeyed Him many years and see no flaming wrath yet. I expect He will feed me still and fill my cup with every form of blessings."

O sinner, for these very reasons have you the more cause to dread His burning wrath! You have abused His mercy well nigh to the last moment of endurance. O how soon will His wrath break forth against thee, and no arm in all the universe can stay its whelming floods of ruin! And if you don't believe it, its coming will be all the more sure, speedy and awful!

## **Evil Thinking**

Lecture III

February 28, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--1 Cor. 13:5: "Charity thinketh no evil."

The context in which these words stand is doubtless familiar to many of you; but it may not be amiss for me to read it. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

You observe that I have selected for my text but one of the many attributes of charity;--namely, that she "thinketh no evil."

In considering this attribute more extensively, I propose,

- I. To inquire what it is to think evil in the sense of the text;*
- II. To show that in this sense charity thinketh no evil;*
- III. To give some of the evidences of evil thinking;*
- IV. To adduce some evidences of that charitable state of mind which thinketh no evil.*

### **I. Thinking evil in the sense of the text includes thinking unjustly.**

- 1. Forming unjust opinions of others, and giving indulgence to feelings in correspondence with our unjust opinions is certainly evil thinking.
- 2. So is thinking enviously. When envy governs our opinions of others, we are guilty of evil thinking.
- 3. So is suspicious thinking. It is another modification of thinking evil. When we are suspicious of others' motives, we think evil of them.
- 4. The same is true of all malicious thinking. Thoughts of malice are of course evil.
- 5. Nor can we say less of revengeful thoughts. They are evil and only evil, continually. Unkind and ill-natured thoughts partake of the same general character. None can doubt that all such thoughts are intrinsically evil, and not good.

Again, dwelling upon others' faults, real or imputed, is evil-thinking. Even if those faults are real, it is not wise to dwell upon them, certainly not unless we can answer the ends of benevolence by so doing. If we can devise means to correct them, so much thinking as may be necessary for this purpose may be good; but thinking of others' faults for any other than a good object is certain to work evil.

- 6. What then shall we say of brooding over those assumed faults of others which are not real but only imputed? Perhaps they owe all their apparent evil to the tinge they get from your morbid imagination, or your jealous heart. In such a case what can be worse than the fermentation of such a mind as yours? It not only wrongs others, but terribly corrodes your own mind. There can be no peace to him who indulges such evil-thinking.
- 7. Thinking over personal injuries, whether real or imaginary, is evil. In such a world as this it will often happen that men are really wronged. But even then why should they double and treble the evil resulting to themselves by dwelling upon it, poring over it, talking about it till they get every sensibility of their being on fire? What is the use? None at all. He only spoils his own peace, and the peace of as many others as he can bring under his poisonous influence. Such thinking is surely a great evil.
- 8. Worse still if the supposed injury is only imaginary. Then wrong is done to the assumed authors, besides all the mischief to the self-tormenting sufferer who perhaps is himself the only cause of all the evil, resulting first to himself, next to his friends, and last but not least, to the man wrongfully accused of the imaginary injustice. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Is not all thinking which kindles up such fires, "evil?"

## **II. Charity thinketh no evil.**

- 1. The word here rendered charity means love. This is its legitimate meaning, and in other passages in the Bible it is usually rendered love. It refers especially to love as the action of a renewed heart--to holy love, and not to any form of the social or domestic instincts. Of this holy love, it is said that it "thinketh no evil." This is popular and not strictly metaphysical language; for in strict phraseology, charity does not think at all; nothing can think except a mind. The meaning therefore is that a charitable mind thinketh no evil. This is plain, and very true.
- 2. It is not however implied that charitable men are blind to facts, or that they are incapable of thinking of things as they are. God's mind is all love--supremely under the control of benevolence; and yet He sees evil none the less; thinks of it and estimates its real nature none the less accurately. So of the human mind under the control of love.

Again, charitable minds may misjudge, but cannot really think or do any evil, subjectively considered. In a charitable state they cannot consent to say or do anything wrong. For example, charity cannot be subjectively unjust. It can never intend injustice. It will always form its judgments honestly, according to its best light. It may form opinions objectively wrong, that is, wrong as to fact--wrong in themselves considered; yet even in forming these it will be subjectively right because under the control of love. For the same reason charity cannot be envious or suspicious. There will be the greatest simplicity in



such a mind. Conscious of its own uprightness, it will not be looking out for hypocrisy in others. It is remarkable how simple-hearted the charitable mind will always be; so truthful, so upright; it has no thought of suspecting others, for it seems a stranger to the idea of wrong. But the uncharitable mind is the reverse of this. It is an old adage--"Set a rogue to catch a rogue." He seems to have the art of suspecting, and knows a world of things about the ways and works and signs of the rogue that no honest man should be expected to know.

- 3. When you see a man very suspicious, you may usually suspect him. If he is a hypocrite he will suspect others of being hypocrites, for he is very familiar with that state of mind. If he is a liar, a thief or a counterfeiter, it will be easy for him to suspect others of some equally scandalous form of vice.
- 4. But on the other hand, the charitable mind is eminently simple-hearted and unsuspecting.

Again, charity cannot be revengeful. It naturally abhors revengeful thoughts. Suppose the charitable man has been injured:--what then? Shall he study revenge? No. He "suffereth long and is kind." It is in his nature to be not revengeful, but kind. Who does not know this? He is inclined to put the best possible construction upon the acts and the motives of others. You do not find him brooding over all the apparent wrong he sees, and magnifying it in his imagination. For example, think of the conduct of parents who really love their children. You do not see them dwell exclusively upon their children's faults, to the entire neglect of their excellencies. Love never does that. Nor can candor and honesty do it. What should you think of a man who should get a telescope of sufficient power to reveal to him one black spot on the sun's disc, and who then gazes at this till it fills his whole vision, and the whole face of the sun seems only black and dark as midnight? You would think him no better than crazy. His mind labors under a hallucination, and does not by any means see things as they are. So of men who gaze at their neighbors' faults till their own minds become so green as to give a greenish hue to everything they see. The mind seems in some peculiar circumstances to have a wonderful power of unconsciously imparting its own moral complexion to the character it contemplates. Hence a very charitable mind often puts upon the conduct of others a more charitable construction than strict truth will sustain; and much more often on the other hand does an uncharitable mind impart its own dark and foul type to the character which it pretends to delineate.

- 5. That is always an ill-natured state of mind which loves to dwell upon others' faults where no interests of benevolence demand it. Think of a husband who is forever poring over the faults of his wife and has no heart to notice her excellencies. He has only evil and not good to say of her, and the more of evil he finds to think of and talk about, the more his mind is fed and feasted. Is not he a monster? Do you believe that he has the heart of a man within him? Of one thing you may be very sure; he has none of that charity which "thinketh no evil." The charitable husband would be grieved to notice her faults, and certainly would never speak of them unless compelled by the sternest necessity.
- 6. The same principle is often developed in the hearing of sermons. Some men notice only the faults they can find; and if a sermon has ninety-nine good qualities and but one of a

questionable character, the latter is the only thing thought of, and no pains are spared to discuss and display its demerits. Of course such hearers are only cursed, never benefited, by hearing sermons; no sermon can ever be good enough to bless their souls. They will lose all the good by watching for anticipated and desired evil. Of course you would not say that such hearers are in a charitable state of mind.

- 7. A charitable man cannot dwell upon injuries received. It grieves him to think of them, and he will of choice banish them entirely from his mind unless some important interests or rights are so involved as to demand his attention to them. He finds more pleasure in dwelling upon the good received than upon the evil.

### **III. Some evidences of evil thinking next demand our attention.**

Some things under this head have already been anticipated. Hence I shall be the more brief now.

- 1. Evil speaking of course evinces a state of evil thinking; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."
- 2. Evil treatment makes the same development. Some men don't like to speak out all they think, but they can not easily prevent its working itself out in their actions. Their looks and their whole demeanor will show it. Perhaps they refuse to exchange the common tokens of civility, and will not even shake hands--their state of mind is so uncharitable.
- 3. A disposition to find fault with others is an evidence of evil thinking. How remarkable that some men say almost nothing else but in the way of fault-finding. If they attempt to speak or pray, fault-finding is uppermost. If they speak in a church meeting, you can anticipate the strain of their remarks--always some form of fault-finding. It seems as if the man was forever brooding over the faults of his brethren. He sees no bright spots ever in any brother or in any church. His temper is morose and crabbed; he is a natural-born Arab; his hand is against every man and every mans' hand against him. You may always know that his bosom is the prey of perpetual evil thinking.
- 4. A disposition to complain of the ill-treatment received from others is another evidence. Fall into conversation with him where you will, he is complaining of having been injured. Somebody has injured him, and it engrosses his mind to the exclusion of almost everything else. This man is given to evil thinking.
- 5. Another evidence of evil thinking is a disposition to complain of being neglected. Some persons have a world of trouble on this score--alas, they are always overlooked; nobody cares as much for them as in their humble opinion they deserve. This state of mind becomes a source of great uneasiness. It proves that they are given to evil thinking.
- 6. Others show their evil thinking by a disposition to question the purity of other's motives. You see some people who can scarcely ever believe that their neighbors and acquaintance are really what they profess to be. It seems most natural to them to assume that everybody besides themselves is dishonest. It may happen that all appears right in their neighbor's conduct. "Well,"

in such a case they will say--"that will do--if--IF he is honest in it." Now you may know without an if that such men are evil thinkers. Their very souls are putrid with jealousy and suspicion. They cannot even put a good construction upon what appears unexceptionable.

The same is true substantially of those who are always disposed to question the piety of others. A man may do some things which are entirely wrong, and yet his general character may be so good that you have no sufficient reason to question his piety. In such a case let charity prevail.

- 7. You sometimes see the evidence of evil thinking in a slowness to credit professions of repentance and sincerity. Sometimes there may be good reasons for being slow in this matter. I speak of cases where the backwardness is not really warranted by anything in the individual's character, or in the present circumstances.
- 8. Evidence of evil thinking is seen sometimes in a readiness to question the truthfulness of others. On this point it should be considered that men may state what is really false, and yet be in heart entirely truthful. They may misapprehend the real state of the facts, may truthfully state the case as they understand it. I have heard during my life thousands of men state things which I knew to be false; yet I did not for this reason feel authorized to say they lied. To assume that they lie is uncharitable--so long as it may be the case that they misapprehend the facts. Memory is sometimes at fault, and sometimes the man may be in real fault for lack of care to inform himself of the certainty of what he affirms; but charity forbids us to put any man down a liar till we are well assured that he affirms for truth what he knows to be false.

The disposition to impute lying to a man on the slightest occasion should be reprobated as in the highest degree uncharitable. Often the mere fact of a man's stating what is not true affords scarcely the shadow of evidence that he lies. We must not believe the man lies unless the circumstances utterly forbid the charitable conclusion.

- 9. A readiness to hear evil is another indication of a state of mind which thinks evil. Sometimes persons will not allow themselves to originate evil reports, but will take them up, believe and circulate them without scruple. It is remarkable that the Bible places these two classes--the originator and the receiver of evil reports--on the same footing, for it promises an abiding place in God's holy will to him "that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor." Whoever therefore takes up a reproach against his neighbor, saying, "Aha, aha, so would we have it"--may be known as one that "thinketh evil."

Moreover, when men manifest a readiness not only to hear but to believe evil reports of others, you may know they are evil thinkers.

- 10. An unhappy state of mind is often an evidence, for it is a development of thinking evil. From the very laws of mind, such persons are always unhappy. You never see persons of evil thinking habits whose countenances shine with the joy of their hearts. Show me an uncharitable man, and I will show you an unhappy man.

- 11. Men who are discontented with their present position are wholly given to evil thinking. Mark those men who cannot bear the neighborhood they live in; those students here who are forever uneasy, rasped, vexed, discontented--who want to get away, and are forever restive for some change; mark them I say; for if you could know the bottom of their hearts, you would find evil thinking there. They are brooding over the dark features of others' character and conduct, and practically forget that there are many good things in almost all men and all situations. Uncharitableness breeds misery and discontent.
- 12. A general want of confidence in others betrays a heart of evil thinking. You see some who seem to have lost confidence in everybody. The Psalmist once said in his haste "all men are liars." If you read that psalm and mark his state of mind you will see that he seemed not to know whom to trust. He didn't believe anybody is pious. He has no confidence in any man. The trouble lies--at least in part--with himself; his heart is thinking evil continually.
- 13. Another evidence is the absence of pain in view of any exhibition of uncharitableness. For example, if you hear persons speak uncharitably and it does not give you pain, you have great reason to suspect yourself of an uncharitable mind. If your own mind were deeply imbued with love, you could not fail of being shocked whenever you hear uncharitable speaking.
- 14. An indisposition to pray for others is yet another evidence. I do not now allude to cases where Christians have no ill feelings at all towards others, and yet for reasons to themselves unknown seem to gain no access to God in prayer for them; but I allude to cases in which men have such a state of uncomfortable feeling towards certain persons that they feel no spirit to pray for them. Such a sign is ominous.
- 15. Finally, evil thinkers may be known by their not rejoicing at the prosperity of others, and not mourning in their adversity. Whoever finds this to be the case with himself may know that he has an uncharitable mind.

**IV. The evidences of a charitable state of mind, which thinketh no evil, are the very opposite of those which I have just been adducing.**

- 1. Where men do not speak evil of others, but speak well, where their treatment of others is benevolent and kind; where instead of fault-finding, you see a disposition to vindicate, apologize for, and commend; where there is no apparent love of dwelling upon others' faults, but a delight in dwelling upon their virtues; in all such cases you see evidences of a charitable spirit.
- 2. The charitable man is not morose, but cheerful; wishes no man evil but every man well; if ill-treated, does not complain, nor is disposed to dwell upon it; don't know as he has any enemies, certainly does not feel as if he had; for although he may know the fact as Christ did in his own case, yet like Christ it is in his heart to say--"Father, forgive for they know not what they do." He loves to overlook injuries, and is by no means disposed to dwell upon them.
- 3. Some men always think they are persecuted and wronged--suppose everybody is their enemy; while others seem never to dream of any such thing. You hear them remark--such a man

thinks ill of me, but he is misinformed; he doesn't mean any wrong. You have seen such persons; their state of mind is so sweet that they don't seem to think anybody can do them any harm. In a charitable state of mind, it is very natural that they should take this view. They manifest no disposition to regard themselves as neglected by others. A pastor who visits his people occasionally, has often a good opportunity to notice the great difference which obtains among persons in this respect. I call on one family, and in the course of our conversations I observe, "It is a long time since I have seen your family at your own home." "Yes," the reply is, "I thought my pastor had neglected me. I began to think he never would visit us again."

I call on another family; I remark to them that it seems a long time since I have seen them; but they have not a word to say about being neglected; no they say--"We know you have a great deal to do--so much to do that we could not expect you to turn aside from your urgent and more important duties, to see us; we are all exceedingly glad to see you--but really we never could blame you if you should not call upon us." Sometimes such a family will go much farther in excusing me than I can in excusing myself, so that I have often felt ashamed and condemned by their apologies for me. Now all this is natural for a charitable mind; but if the mind is in an uncharitable state, everything is horribly distorted.

Again, those whose minds are charitable have no disposition to question the purity of others' motives. They love to put the best admissible construction upon every man's conduct. Herein is fulfilled that truthful and beautiful sentiment--"Charity shall cover a multitude of sins."

## **REMARKS.**

1. Many think evil who do not speak it. Often such persons take great credit to themselves for not speaking evil, when really they are thinking a great deal of evil. The reason they do not speak evil is not because their hearts are full of love and good will; but perhaps because they have not a good opportunity, or because some motives of policy restrain them. It is a great mistake to be proud of such virtue.
2. Many forget that charity thinketh no evil. It seems to escape their minds that the law of love reaches to the heart and to the most secret thoughts.
3. Evil thinkers are for the time being impenitent. Theirs is not a religious state of mind. This is most manifest, for nothing can be religious which is not charitable. The uncharitable man, remaining such, can have nothing really good about him.
4. This state of mind is exceedingly deceptive. The uncharitable man dwells so much and so intensely upon the faults of others, and gets so much excited by his own thinking and talking on the subject, that he makes himself think that he ought to be uncharitable. Oh, he has been so egregiously wronged; he would forfeit all self-respect if he did not resent it and manifest his indignation. Those fearful wrongs done himself--how they fill the whole field of his vision, and seem to be the greatest wrongs that ever fell to the hard lot of any mortal. And can it be wrong for him to dwell upon them and condemn their author?

5. Those who sympathize with each other in this state of mind can see neither their own nor each other's faults. All being alike in an uncharitable state of mind, they are unfit to judge correctly of the moral quality of their own, or of each others' moral exercises. The same causes which blind the uncharitable man to his own sins, blind him also to the sins of his neighbor, provided those sins sustain and vindicate his own. Hence where a church falls into an uncharitable state of mind, there is the less hope of any remedy originating from themselves. Hand joins in hand, and heart sustains heart in defense of uncharitableness. Their moral state becomes dark indeed, and the prospect of any improvement is gloomy.

6. The manifestations of this state of evil thinking are often odious and shocking. Sometimes men make these manifestations without being themselves aware of it. I recollect the case of a minister who once spent some time at our house. After he had gone, one of the children said, "Don't you think Mr. \_\_\_\_, has a bad spirit?" "Why do you ask that question?" "Because he is finding fault with everybody." If ever I see him again, I mean to tell him what impression his conversation made on my children. I have warned him against this practice of evil-speaking, and I cannot acquit my conscience without rebuking him again.

It is astonishing that a man can be so blind as not to see such things in himself. But there are men who will manifest a spirit which will shock even a child, and yet be quite unconscious of being in a bad state of mind.

7. Our own blindness and self-conceit make us think ourselves abused when we are not. Hence a man may regard the treatment he received from others as wholly wrong, when it is really occasioned by his own position and circumstances. If this man is honest and candid, and should come to see things as they are, he would cry out--"I certainly have deserved a thousand times more than I have received. I once thought myself wronged, but I have changed my views. I now see that the wrong was chiefly and perhaps wholly on my side." I have known cases of this sort. Men are sometimes so blind to their faults, that they cannot bear to have others say of them what is most just. It is hence common for men to attribute to others a bad spirit, when if they saw things as they are, they would see that themselves are chiefly in fault.

8. Just apprehensions of ourselves would often remove the temptation to think hard of others. When you come to estimate yourself rightly, you no longer wonder that men should think evil of you. So I have found it in my own case. Hence, when men feel themselves tried, they would do well to say--Is there not a cause? This is always wise; for it may be that a candid self-scrutiny will put the whole matter in a new light before our own minds. It certainly can do no harm for us to ask--Now really, am I not full as bad as others think me to be? In very many cases you will find by honest searching of yourself, that there lies the cause!

When persons find themselves tempted to take a wrong view of a matter, instead of brooding over the wrong, they should ask--What does God intend by this in His providence? Lord, search me--let him say--Lord search me, try me, and know my thoughts, and let me see whether these people are not Thy rod. As Shimei cursed David, and David said--"Let him curse; the Lord hath bidden him"; so we should look upon those who speak evil of us, when we are ourselves conscious of having occasioned

it. In such a case what have we to do that we should retaliate? God has designed it for our good, and it becomes us to receive it from His hand. Let us then inquire--May there not be some truth in these charges or these insinuations? Is it not for some good reason that the Lord has permitted the tongue of evil men to run loose against me? What is the lesson which God in His providence would teach me by these things?

Right over against this is the other course--"I do well to resist and repel; somebody has spoken evil of me, and I am a grievously abused man." Now shall I take this course under reproach? No. I would as soon take arsenic. Shall I cry out--"Oh, I have been abused--My God, take my part, for I am greatly abused"? No; let me rather say--O, my God, what wouldst Thou teach me? Wouldst Thou have me pray for my enemy? Then let me do it. If a man has smitten out my right eye, let me first inquire what God means by permitting such an event. And moreover, let me also inquire, not only what provocations they actually have, but what they may think they have. How often have I wished that I could see myself through other people's eyes! I should love to place myself in their position, and ask how things look from their stand-point of observation. Perhaps they are so situated as to know only the evil things of my character and conduct. It was so even of Jesus Christ. Those who knew Him only through the wicked Scribes and Pharisees would of course hear no good of Him, and much evil--not indeed, in His case, evil that He had ever done, but evil that they alleged against Him.

9. Evil thinkers are self-tormentors. This has been intimated before. A man who is continually brooding over the real or supposed faults of others, the injuries he has received, and the evil that others have done, is in any other than a desirable state of mind. He renders himself completely wretched, and from the very nature of mind can not be otherwise. We see some men in almost every community who seem to be always unhappy, discontented. They are complainers, murmurers, fault-finders, and are a source of vexation to themselves, greatly to be pitied, and greatly to be blamed.

10. Again, evil thinkers are a curse to their families. If either fathers or mothers allow themselves to think evil, they almost of course become censorious and fill the minds of their children and all over whom they have influence with prejudices against others. They so often speak of the faults, real or supposed, of their neighbors, and oftentimes, of their nearest friends that they create the impression in their family that these persons are not to be trusted. Consequently the minds of the family become filled with evil thoughts, evil-surmisings and suspicions which work like poison itself through the moral heart and constitution of the whole family. It is remarkable to witness the state of religion in a great many families, owing manifestly, at least in a great degree, to the fact that some influential member of the family, perhaps the father or the mother, is in the habit of indulging evil thoughts, and of manifesting these thoughts either in conversation or in conduct to the family. A man can in scarcely any way be a greater and more sure curse to his family than by such a course as this. See that man who is a father. He seldom speaks in such a way to his family as to give them confidence and charity towards any of his neighbors. He brings home little else to their ears than the evil reports of the neighborhood in respect to everybody about him. His family soon become a band of evil thinkers and evil speakers, and slander is the order of the day.

11. An evil thinker is a curse to the church of which he is a member. He does much to undermine Christian confidence, create prejudices and alienate feelings. He is a root of bitterness, springing up and troubling the church. He is suspicious of his minister, has little confidence in his brethren. He

broods over their faults, without seeing or commending their virtues. He finds fault. He makes his minister and his brother an offender for a word, and overlooks what is excellent and of good report. The sooner a church can get rid of such a member, the better for them.

12. An evil thinker is a great stumbling-block to the world. What can be a greater stumbling-block to the world, than for a professor of religion to overlook all the virtues, and retail all the failings, real or supposed, of his brethren. How greatly do ungodly men feel themselves strengthened in their opposition to the church when they get the countenance and support of such a man as this.

Again, a charitable mind insures peace and quietness of spirit. An individual who thinketh no evil, but who "hopeth all things and endureth all things," has that peace and quietness of mind to which all other persons are strangers.

Again, we see how to account for the discontent and unhappiness of a great many persons in the church and out of the church. You mark one of these discontented spirits when and where you will, and will find that they are evil thinkers, that they are ready to say, or have said in their hearts--"All men are liars."

Again, how important it is to control the thoughts aright; important to our peace, important to our own usefulness, important to our own salvation, important to the peace and usefulness and salvation of all around us. A great many people seem to lose sight of the great importance to themselves and others of obeying this precept of the apostle, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

## **Prayer for A Pure Heart**

Lecture IV

March 14, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Psa. 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

The term rendered "right" in this passage is in the margin, constant, and this seems to be its precise meaning. A constant, stedfast spirit, as opposed to the fickle and unstable state in which he had so sadly fallen before temptation, was the thing he now desired and sought in earnest prayer.



In discussing the subject brought before us in this passage, I shall,

*I. Show what this petition really means.*

*II. What is implied in offering it acceptably.*

### **I. The terms heart and spirit are used in the Bible in various senses.**

The term heart often denotes the will, or the voluntary attitude or state of the will. Sometimes it is opposed to flesh, and then is synonymous with mind as distinct from body. In our text, both heart and spirit seem to be used in their widest and most general sense, including the whole mind--not its voluntary powers and states only, but also those which are involuntary. We must suppose that these terms as here used, include other powers than the will, for it is manifest that his will was substantially in a right state already. He did not regard his will as opposed to God, for his will goes out in this earnest, and apparently most sincere prayer that his whole being might be made pure, and be put in such a state that he should never sin again. It lies on the very face of this psalm that David's will was right before God. Hence he prays for something which he calls a clean heart and a right spirit, which is more than merely a right state of the will -- which may be wisely sought in prayer after one's will is subdued, humbled, yielded to God and submissive. Of course a clean heart and a right spirit, as here used, imply a thorough cleansing or sanctification of the whole mind; including the regulation, or cleansing of the imagination, the thoughts, desires, feelings--all those modifications of the sensibility, and all those habitudes of thought and feeling which so often annoy the Christian and become most distressing and dangerous snares to his soul. These are often spoken of in the Bible as fleshly--"fleshly lusts that war against the soul." David obviously prays that God would do for him all the his omniscient eye saw needful to make and keep himself pure from all sin, forever. He prays to be made right throughout all the powers and habitudes of his being.

### **II. What is implied in offering it acceptably?**

- 1. That it be offered intelligently. The suppliant must understand what he needs, and have a practical and just apprehension of it. There can be no real prayer without this.
- 2. This implies, of course, a deep conviction of past sin. One who is not convicted by the Holy Ghost has no conception of what this language means. Indeed, without the illumination and convicting agency of the Spirit, the sinner has no right conceptions of any thing of a spiritual nature. Hence, he needs to be convicted, so as to understand thoroughly the nature of sin; then he will see his need, and feel it deeply. This deep feeling, based on a just apprehension of his sin and guilt, is essential to acceptable prayer for a clean heart.
- 3. A sincere offering of this prayer implies sincere repentance--a real turning of the will from all sin; for without this there can not be sincere prayer for a clean heart.
- 4. It implies, also, confession of sin to God. By this I mean more than simply uttering our acknowledgment of sins before God; I mean confessing them as sins committed against God, deeply realizing the power and self-application of David's words--"Against thee, thee only have

I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Now it is easy, and cheap too, for some men to confess their sins, but truly to understand the nature of sin in its relations to God--to see how odious and how abominably guilty one's own sin is in view of these relations; this is much more than mere oral confession. And yet the suppliant must enter deeply into those views of sin, and realize that for his great sins against God he deserves the divine wrath forever, or he can not throw his whole soul into this prayer for a clean heart and a right spirit.

- 5. There must also be a deep apprehension of one's danger of falling under temptation. It is plain that David in praying for a clean heart and a right spirit, made use of popular language, but really referred to those things in his constitution and habits which had been to him occasions of great sin. Who does not know that after the will is set right, and has done all it can do towards consecrating the whole being to God, the occasions of sin still exist, and may still act with great energy. For example, the imagination, long trained in the course of sin, long corrupted, polluted, filled with foul images, and terribly under the control of impure associations--this remains to be regulated, renovated, and as we might well say, cleansed, before it can be otherwise than a snare, and a most unfit associate of a right will.

It should however be understood that sin, strictly speaking, belongs to acts of the will only; and that of course, when sin or moral defilement is predicated of other faculties or states of the mind, the language is used in a popular and not a metaphysical sense. While this is true and important to be understood, it still remains true also that our mental associations, our habitudes of both mind and body have been during our life of sin such that they continue after conversion to be active and fruitful occasions of sin. This is illustrated in the case of David. His imagination had not become so regulated, nor had his passions been so crucified and sanctified as to cease to act as occasions and temptations to sin. His lusts and appetites had long been so indulged and so developed by indulgence, that though his will was converted to God, yet it might still be overpowered by their temptations. Every Christian knows more or less of the presence and power of these temptations. He is also conscious that these appetites, feelings, passions, imaginations and habitudes create within the mind a certain uneasiness and sense of loathing as if they were really unclean.

The Bible speaks of "the motions of sins," while we are in the flesh, as "working in our members to bring forth fruit unto death," and it would seem to speak of them in popular language as being sinful. As to the case of David, whoever has had experience in the government of a vitiated sensibility, and of indulged passion, can not read this psalm without seeing what were the workings of his mind. Deeply convicted of his great sin, his mind turns within upon those propensities of such fearful power--those appetites and habitudes, and those workings of a vile imagination which had so woefully ensnared his soul and dishonored his God, and he cries aloud--O, my God, give me a pure heart--"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

Hence this prayer implies, as I said, a clear apprehension of those things which become occasions of sin, and involve especially a request for their entire subjugation and cleansing.

Those of you who have read Madame Guyon, noticed that in speaking of the great work wrought in her, she alludes to the fact that her imagination had been greatly polluted, but was at length, through sanctifying grace, so brought under the power of a holy will, as to be no longer a source of conflict as before, so in the case of all Christians, the correction of all these habitudes of mind and wayward imaginings and physical propensities constitutes an important part of the work of moral cleansing.

- 6. This prayer offered acceptably implies a loathing of these occasions of sin and a deep dread of them. Take, for example, the man who has a polluted imagination. If he be a Christian, will he not find this an occasion of great self-loathing? Deeply ashamed of himself, he often feels as if it would be a relief to him if he could spue out his very self--all those vile pollutions of thought and imagination--and be a new and pure creature. For although the action of the imagination is not itself sin, not being directly a voluntary state of mind, yet it often becomes a most disgusting and loathsome occasion of sin, and consequently in the renewed mind an occasion of great conflict. Hence the strong desire to be made pure in these respects.
- 7. It involves also an apprehension of our dependence on God to subdue those habitudes of sin. Every one who has tried to manage them himself has learned his own weakness; but ordinarily men learn their weakness and dependence no faster than they gain this experience by efforts to master these propensities to sin. How often does the Christian find himself thrown in to deep agonizing, struggling and struggling a long time perhaps in vain to gain the fixed ascendancy over all within which creates temptations and occasions to sin! When this painful and dear-bought experience has thoroughly taught a man his dependence on God, he can then sincerely ask God to do this great work of moral cleansing for him. Without the teachings of experience, you can scarcely expect any man to be so sincere and heartily earnest in praying as to prevail. It seems indispensable that every Christian should know, past all doubt or demurring, that he needs God's aid, and can do nothing to the purpose without it.
- 8. This prayer also implies a confidence in the ability of God to do this work. It is a most remarkable fact that nearly the whole church has embraced the opinion that death must do this work. I speak now only of the masses of professed Christians, for some individuals hold different views, and pray as David did for entire moral cleansing to take place here in time. There is no evidence in this Psalm that David prayed or expected death to do this work; on the other hand he most obviously prayed for a work to be done here and now, and himself expected to live after it was done, and tells God what he shall do after his heart is made clean in answer to his prayers. "Then," says, he, "will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

But most Christians in these latter ages of the world have expected and do expect death to this work, and of course they expect nothing better than to carry along all these loathsome things till they die. A hard lot this, if indeed it were all allotment of Jehovah; but a strange lot for a Christian to impose upon himself by failing to embrace the proffer of almighty aid, in the speedy accomplishment of a universal renewal unto holiness.

Certain others have thought that subduing the propensities is equivalent to their

annihilation. This, however is a great mistake; for David who prayed that his whole being might be cleansed, evidently did not expect to lose his imagination altogether, nor indeed did he think of having any other faculty of mind or body annihilated, as if God had created some faculties which are intrinsically evil, and must therefore be expunged from the system before it can be morally pure! Not so, I say, did David think and pray; but on the contrary he prayed virtually that God would regenerate his whole being--overhaul it--make it over, mold it into purity and order, till it should subserve, and not derange the right action of a sanctified will.

- 9. This prayer implies confidence not only that God is able to answer it, but also not less that He is willing, and moreover that to do it is in accordance with the plans and purposes of his moral government. If he had only believed that God is able, but that He has no purpose, plan or will to do such a thing, under any circumstances of our earthly life, would it not have been blasphemous for him to have offered this prayer? Look at it! Suppose David had believed as some now are understood to hold, that God, though able, had no intention or will to give the Christian a clean heart during this life, would not this prayer of his have been impious? It would be as much as to say--Lord I know thou hast no desire or intention to give thy children a pure heart in this world; but, Lord, we want this blessing, and we want it now, and we can not be denied--let thy purposes stand ever so much opposed to granting the blessing. Now could the Psalmist have offered such a prayer without tempting God? Certainly not. Hence we may infer that he doubtless believed it to be in accordance with God's government and plans to bestow this blessing when earnestly sought by prayer.

I have often known men who had great misgivings whether God did not intend, in all cases, to leave Christians through life impure--their hearts not cleansed in the sense of our text. Consequently if they ever ask for these blessings, they are afraid to believe, and hence they can not possibly cast themselves upon the Lord in such confidence as is essential to prevailing prayer. They know that God is able, but they do not believe Him willing; hence they are greatly troubled, and there can be no strong confidence, no child-like trust in their prayers.

Not so David. Plainly he held God to be willing as well as able. You must certainly admit that David assumed God's willingness to do the very thing he asked, whatever you may suppose that thing to be. The real thing requested in his prayer, he must have supposed God most willing to perform.

- 10. The sincere offering of the prayer that God would create in us a clean heart implies that on our part we are willing to have the thing done. Persons often have strong desires that something were done, who yet are not willing it should be done. A tooth aches bitterly; they know it ought to come out; O, how they wish it were out now--but are they willing to have it done? That's the trying point. Their desires in the matter are very strong, but don't amount to a willingness. So, often, in regard to wishing and praying for a clean heart. It often happens that persons think they want a pure heart; but when they come to see all that is implied in it, they shrink back, and say, no; we can not meet all those consequences. A striking case of this sort once fell under my observation. A young lady claimed she was willing to become a Christian, and I suppose honestly thought so, I often pressed her with the fact that she was not really willing to become a

Christian, but she as often resisted my position and my arguments. Ultimately she heard a sermon which greatly affected her, and brought her to determine that she would not live in her sins any longer. She turned her thoughts in deep earnest towards God--she began to ask Him to take away all her sins--when suddenly she saw so clearly how much would be involved in this, that she shrunk back--withdrew her petition--rose from her knees and went her way. She had found that she did not want to be such a Christian.

So, often, with professed Christians. When they see all that is implied in a clean heart, they turn away. They may have offered this prayer often without at all apprehending how much it implies. When they come to see the whole matter they are conscious of shrinking from meeting such results.

Hence an acceptable offering of this prayer implies that we are willing to have this whole work done--are willing to have every constitutional appetite, passion, tendency and function of either flesh or spirit so modified as to come perfectly under the control of right reason, and of God's revealed will. We must be willing to have our bodies become fit temples for God's indwelling Spirit; every function or faculty of our entire nature being in harmony with a holy heart, being such as would not soil an angel's purity, if his spirit were to inhabit our body, and act through our physical organs.

- 11. This prayer offered acceptably, implies that we are willing God should do his own work in his own way.

It often happens that really men dictate to God the manner in which things shall be done. They ask only with certain reservations and qualifications--as if they would say--May God be pleased to do this thing provided it shall not touch my idol; my God sanctify all my appetites, so as to bring them under the law of enlightened reason, except this favorite one--spare me this, for I am very partial to it, and it has been such a comfort to me so long! Or perhaps they are afraid to pray right out--without qualification or exception, that God would actually give them a heart universally clean, and a spirit altogether right, lest, if their prayer should be answered it might smite some of the precious things they love. As a woman once said to me--"I dare not ask for sanctification, lest if I should, God should take away my husband!" "But why such fears?" "Because I am conscious that my heart is greatly bound up in him, and I am terribly afraid that God could not sanctify me without tearing him away from my heart."

Of course the woman could not pray--"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." This prayer implies that we are willing to have any sacrifice made which God sees to be necessary; that we yield up ourselves to all the outward training, and also to all the inward training which in the eye of God may appear to be requisite. We submit ourselves to his discretion as to the things to be done--as to the time, the manner, and all the circumstances of doing it. We do most fully and freely consent that God should use his own infinite wisdom. Let Him smite whatever he sees it best to smite. Let my soul commit itself into his hands to suffer any pain, and endure any sacrifice which his wisdom may choose and his love can inflict. Let me never fear any unreasonable severity from such a Father!

But how often Christians have their own way marked out for God to walk in. They would have Him be careful to deal with themselves very gently, and especially beware not to use his providential rod too roughly. It would suit them well if the Lord would come down upon them as with an electric shock and shake their very souls into purity and holiness. Some sudden and purely spiritual agency is often the thing they are dreaming of, and they prefer that the clean heart shall come in this way rather than by any form of sore trial. They seem not to realize that there are some attachments of such a character that God can not rectify them without seizing upon the loved object, cutting it down, tearing up its very roots, and rending asunder all those tender ligaments which bind our hearts in selfish, idolatrous love to our idol. Every Christian ought to consider that asking God sincerely to create in us a clean heart involves the submission of our entire case to his management, with full permission from us to use the knife, or any thing else He may find necessary for a thorough cure.

- 12. This prayer, to be acceptable, must involve not only a willingness to have the thing done, but to take with it the consequences which will naturally follow. If the gift of a clean heart involves new relations and new duties, we must meet them cheerfully, and what is more, in anticipation of them we must not shrink; for if we do, we can not have the gift. Thus, for example, it is obviously the duty of those whom God thus blesses to glorify his name. Let them, like the ancient leper, go into the temple to bear their public testimony to saving grace. Or, like David let them be able to say--"I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." Even beforehand let them say as he did--"Deliver me, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness;" "open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

Now many would be very willing to be religious, if they might accomplish it all without any consequent reproach. They might even be happy to be sanctified if they might have the blessing with no attendant dishonor--no sacrifice of reputation; if nobody would talk about them--if none would observe their conduct and their spirit more closely than before. But all such compromises for reputation's sake are vain and ruinous. You must be willing to lay your very self upon God's altar--yourself I say, your all; reputation, name, ease, your estate if need be, your personal liberty if God's providence calls for it, and even your life. Go up with firm, unfaltering step and lay your all upon that altar; then let God do with that offering what He will;--blast it--burn it--blow it to every quarter of the heavens; yet lay it down and say, whether in the fear or the fact of all losses--"These things are thine, O my God--do with them all as thou pleasest. Spare me nothing which thou pleasest to take. I trust thy wisdom and thine infallible love." Now every Christian should know that the gift of a clean heart and a right spirit comes not from God till he is willing to take with it its legitimate consequences--nay more, till he is willing to trust those results to the wisdom of his great Father. You must be willing to be made a spectacle to angels and to men, for God will never light a candle to put it under a bushel. You may lift up your cry the hundredth time for the blessing; still the question will return--Will you glorify God? Will you let your light shine? Will you do all you can to make the gift, if bestowed on you, available to the glory of the Blessed Giver? God asks--Are you willing I should put you in the furnace and heat up the fire to seven-fold

fury, and let the world look on to see what grace can do? You greatly mistake if you suppose God does such works of sanctifying mercy for your sake alone. "Not for your sake, be it known unto you, O house of Israel, saith the Holy One, but for my holy name's sake."

Let it then be well understood that you must be willing to meet and bear the trials which God sends. You must expect trials, such trials as will probably call the attention of others to your case. God perhaps would fain profit others by the blessings He gives you. If so, should you rebel? Perhaps He would glorify Himself. If so, shall you shrink? Never. It becomes you rather to glory in tribulation, outward or inward--for it is sweet even by suffering, to be made the passive instruments of glorifying our Father in heaven. Let the burning trial come, if the grace of God thereby shines the more brightly. It is the manner of our God to make the holiness of his people and the riches of his own grace shine most gloriously in the furnace of affliction.

### REMARKS.

1. I remark first what I have already said in substance but repeat here, that David intended to be sanctified in the present life. His will at the time of his offering the prayer in the text was already right, but he had others things about him which were not right, and his soul was fixed to have them corrected. His vile imagination must be regulated--his lusts subdued and slain. He wanted the whole man set in such tone that he should not be forever falling before temptation. All these were blessings which he needed in the present life if ever--needed then--which moreover he prayed he might obtain then, and which he manifestly expected then.
2. Many are in the habit of using this language of prayer frequently without really apprehending what it means. Consequently their prayers obtain no particular answer. No man need expect a specific answer to prayer unless he prays for something specific and knows what it is. It is impossible that there should be intelligent desire for objects unless those objects are apprehended by the mind with considerable distinctness.
3. Many do not fulfill the conditions so as offer the prayer acceptably. They lack the requisite confidence in God. Not asking in faith, they can not receive, for their unbelief places it beyond the power of God to bless them without sacrificing his own honor.
4. We do not understand the recorded prayers of Scripture, nor the promises, until we are brought into a state of mind similar to that of the writer. Recurring to the case of David, I do not mean that none can understand his prayer in our text until they have committed David's sins; but I do mean that we must see ourselves to have committed some sins, and that we must be greatly humbled and deeply penitent as he was--be filled with utter self-loathing as was the case with him. Such a state of mind brings out the full and precious meaning of the promise; it unfolds it like a charm, in lustre and glory such as none but the humbled soul can possibly appreciate.

It is moreover quite essential that we should understand our liabilities to fall before temptation. Probably David, before his sin, was not aware of his great danger--did not know how powerful those occasions to sin actually were. He might have been entirely unaware that any circumstances could

ever have involved in such dreadful sin--first seduction and adultery; then betrayal and murder in their meanest form; who can believe that David, anterior to his sin, understood all his own fearful liabilities to such sins as these? What, therefore, must have been his amazement when these terrible tendencies and occasions of sin came to be developed! How did he then cry out in the deep anguish of his soul--"O my God, save me from myself! O my God, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." So must every Christian see himself in these dark, fearful aspects of his character, before his prayer will be, like David's, a prayer of deep agony of soul.

5. It is not uncommon for Christians to have a right will and of course be in this respect acceptable to God while yet their previous habits have been so bad as to subject them to continual struggles and warfare; the imagination taking its filthy course and rioting in its pollutions unless constantly held in check by the pressure of some great considerations. Now the thing needed by such persons is to see their dangers and liabilities, and then to throw themselves upon the saving strength of the Most High.

6. The unsanctified, involuntary states of mind are great enemies to the soul. These appetites are the "fleshly lusts" that war against the soul's peace and purity. If these were removed there would still remain the devil to war against; with them we have both Satan from without, and our unsubdued propensities and ungoverned imagination within.

Formerly it was supposed that these conflicts with appetite were a real warfare with inborn and inbred sin. I hold no such doctrine. These appetites are not themselves sin, but they are the occasions of sin--the means of temptation to sin, and hence are objects of dread and loathing to the Christian.

7. In proportion as these lusts are subdued, there will arise in the mind a sense of purity. I have said that the soul loathes these appetites and passions which become occasions of sin, and loathes itself on account of them and their vile associations. For the same reasons, when purified from these loathed abominations, there will ensue a sweet consciousness of being pure, such as can by no means exist prior to their subjugation and cleansing.

8. This rectification of the appetites, sensibilities and imagination, has been commonly called sanctification, because men have really supposed that these things were themselves sinful. If they really were so, then their rectification would be genuine sanctification. In popular language there seems to be no strong objection to their being so called now. Indeed the Bible, ever using popular language, speaks of sanctification as affecting "spirit, soul and body." "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless"--as if blame might attach to either. The writer doubtless intends simply the sanctification of the whole man--in which state the body would no longer become the occasion of sin to the mind.

9. This blessing is exceedingly valuable and desirable. It is hardly possible to estimate adequately its great value. Let one experience what David did--have reason to loathe himself as he had; have occasion to know the dreadful power of those inward foes--those terrible snares to his soul;--let him see how his tyrant lusts have overpowered him and laid him prostrate and bleeding in the dust;--then may he see how greatly desirable it is to have even the hottest fires of providential discipline seize upon him and burn up all his tin and all his dross, till nothing remains but gold well purified. O how he will rejoice even through such a process to come forth redeemed, and cleansed, so that he may



stand henceforth perfect and complete in all the will of God!

10. This blessing is indispensable to inward tranquility and peace of mind. In no farther than this entire work is advanced, can one enjoy repose in God. The will may be right; but the mind will almost continually experience those terrible agitations which result from conflict with unsubdued, ungoverned sensuality. There can be no abiding peace till the whole man is brought into harmony with God's service--with a holy will and a holy life.

11. Especially is this blessing greatly desirable as a condition of passing tranquilly through sore outward trials. When men have received this blessing, it seems to be the order of God's providence to test them, and cause them to exhibit great calmness, to the praise of victorious grace. Then observers will wonder how they can pass so calmly and so sweetly through trials so fiery. As the three children in Daniel walked within the burning furnace, amid its hottest flames, and when they came forth no smell of fire had been on them, for the Son of God had been with them there--so when Christians have their lusts subdued and slain before hand--so that Jesus can walk with them through the furnace, no fires can burn upon them from without, nor from within. All is calm and all is safe. Said a man once of a Christian sister who was under most distressing trials--"I wonder how she can live." But she was calm and quiet as a lamb. God can purify us so that we can pass through the most terrific trials unruffled as the air of a summer evening.

12. This state is greatly important to our highest usefulness. Men have been useful without this; but if they would be useful in the highest degree they must go to God imploring him to do all He sees they need. This is the very spirit in which we should apply to God for this blessing. "O my God, do all thy will in me; then put me in any position in the universe which will most fully illustrate and extol thy grace. No matter what it be, only let it greatly glorify thy name."

13. Until this work is done, Christians will, more or less frequently, be a great stumbling-block to the world, and indeed to all others. So was David. His heart was not thoroughly made pure; hence a constant liability to such dreadful sins as those into which he fell. Pres. Edwards made, and put on record this most excellent resolution;--"When I fall into any sins, I will not rest until I have searched out and found the occasion and have removed it." This great man had learned enough from his own experience to show him that he must look for the occasions of sin. When a patient is sick you would not attach the symptoms, but would look for the occasions or causes and would seek to remove them; so in the occurrence of sin, you must look for the occasions and give yourself no rest till they are thoroughly removed. Hence the fitness of this prayer made by the Psalmist--and hence the reason why you should go to God and cry, "O my God create in me a clean heart;--take away all these distressing occasions of sin, or I shall continue to dishonor thee and bring reproach on thy name."

## **The Joy of God's Salvation**

### Lecture V

April 13, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Psa. 51:12: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

In speaking from these words, I shall,

*I. Show what the Psalmist prayed for.*

*II. Why he prayed for it.*

*III. The essential elements of such a prayer.*

*IV. What is implied in offering such a prayer acceptably.*

**I. Our first enquiry respects the elements which enter into the Christian's joy, or in other words, the joy of God's salvation.**

It is pertinent to observe here that there are elements in this joy which belong not to the holy joy of beings who have never sinned. The saved sinner has some forms of joy that the unfallen angel has not and can not have. From this I do not infer that the sinful, when saved, are more happy than the sinless who have never needed salvation. I only say that the joy of each has elements in it which are unlike those of the other, and this every one must see who enters at all into the peculiar circumstances and state of mind of each class.

The words of our text are found in what is called David's penitential psalm. This psalm, as the caption states and as the scope sufficiently shows, was written with reference to David's great sin in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah. It may have been written at the very time of his being rebuked by Nathan, and of his becoming penitent, as the caption of the psalm would seem to indicate; or if written sometime, more or less, afterwards, it was evidently in recollection of those scenes; so that we must regard these circumstances as being the occasion of the prayer in our text.

Our question now is--What are the principal ingredients or elements of this state of mind?

- 1. A sense of pardon. A man might repent, and yet not have in full measure the joys of God's salvation; for one element of this joy is a sense of pardon. The sinner needs to have the revelation made in some way to him that God forgives him.
- 2. A sense of divine reconciliation. We can conceive that a man may be truly penitent and yet have no manifestations made to his soul of God's forgiving grace; he might not see that God is reconciled to him; might not think of or believe any such thing. But it is plain that some degree of divine manifestations on this point is essential to constitute the joy of God's salvation, in the

case of a sinner convicted of sin. It might not be essential to a sinless being; but must be to one who like David has sinned, and feels himself to have fallen under the divine displeasure.

- 3. The love of complacency. The Scriptures speak of "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." The experience of Christians show that this shedding abroad of divine love in the heart by the Holy Ghost usually follows the deep exercises of penitence and of faith in redeeming blood.

This love of complacency is a state of the sensibility as opposed to any action of the will. It consists substantially in emotions of pleasure and delight in God and in his ways and works, and differs essentially from the love of benevolence. It is one of the elements of a forgiven sinner's joy.

- 4. A sense of inward purity. I do not suppose an individual could have the joy of God's salvation unless he had a sense of inward purity. He could not have real and rich joy unless he felt as Brainard expressed himself--"I am clean from both past and present sin." With out this element one may have excitement, but can not have the real joy of God's salvation. For he still lacks the real salvation itself; still lacks that in which the real blessedness of a saved soul chiefly consists;--namely, inward purity; positive deliverance from present sin. When God applies the energy of his Spirit to renew the soul, and in place of selfish lusts, to shed abroad his own love in the heart, there is begotten a sweet sense of present purity, and the soul has the witness in itself that sin is put away, and that divine love has taken its place.
- 5. A sense of inward harmony. By this I refer to a state of mind which is in harmony with God and with all other holy beings in the universe, and also in harmony with itself. Its own powers are brought into such fitting correlation with each other, and all together are in such relations to God, that the very working of their perfect machinery produces harmony. Perhaps there is no word which so well expresses this delightful result as harmony. It is indeed like the harmony of sweet music. Each separate vibration fits every other; and together they produce the results of most exquisite harmony. None will understand this unless they have a keen apprehension of what the word harmony means. I have often been struck to see how differently men will understand the meaning of words, or language. It is so with regard to this word, harmony. Some minds have no just conception of what harmony is. But one who has a keen relish for harmony in sounds, who has a cultivated taste, and an ear well attuned, can understand what is intended by harmony of soul when all its powers are in tune. He can understand it too by the law of contrast. Let him listen to the grating discord of a piano, or worse still of an organ when utterly out of tune: O, how it rakes his sensibilities! So the mind in its unconverted state; and so too as it passes along slowly in its progress towards becoming attuned to the sweet harmony of love. But when God Himself sits down to it to put it in tune--when He really takes it in hand and puts every pipe and every string in order, so that He can run his divine fingers over it, and make it breathe forth the very harmony of heaven--then, O what music! No words can describe it! But if you will commit your own soul into God's hands that He may put it in spiritual tune, you may learn by experience what it is. You will find it a most blessed experience. When every power, every affection, every element of your soul's activities is in such tune that not a note, not even a semitone can be found in it which is not perfectly in tune, then what rich harmony will it discourse! Peace will be an all-pervading element in the atmosphere of your soul. Every

opinion, every emotion, every affection is in harmony with God.

- 6. Of course there will be implied in this, a delight in the whole revealed will of God; in all his character; in all he does and in all he omits to do. It involves acquiescence in all his providential arrangements, including all He accomplishes and all He neglect to accomplish. When this state of mind exists in its purity, there is a universal satisfaction of mind in God. Every want and demand both of our nature and of our circumstances is seen to be perfectly met in God. A deep apprehension of this forms a prominent part of the joy of God's salvation.

## II. Why should this blessing be sought in prayer?

- 1. The thing is desirable in itself. It is in itself a good, and therefore it is lawful to pray for it.
- 2. It is honorable to God that his people should possess this joy. Such happiness ought to characterize the children of so great and so bountiful a Father.
- 3. Its absence is greatly dishonorable to God. Is it not dishonorable to a king that his "children should go mourning all their days?" How strange that those who profess to be children of God should have no joy! What! Is it not dishonorable to God to have his people lean and ill-favored, going about the streets like walking skeletons? As if He could endure this Himself; and not only so, but even like them the better for their rags and filthiness! Who can believe this? What prince on earth ever kept his court and above all, his children, looking in such style?
- 4. It is not only dishonorable to God, but highly disgraceful to themselves for Christians to live without spiritual joy and peace. Consider what is implied in a Christian's complaining of the absence of spiritual joy. It must imply either that God is very careful about giving his children occasions of joy, or that they are loath to embrace and improve those occasions.
- 5. The joy of the Christian is exceedingly useful to others. Who can estimate the value of a living fountain of water in a barren desert? Like Siloam's well in a land of drought, or like an oasis in a wilderness is a Christian who has always some thing to say of the joy of God's salvation. His words and his spirit are all the more reviving because so many are always complaining. How often are we grieved and distressed with these complaints!

On the other hand, a single joyous-hearted Christian is a priceless blessing in a family. To have one such Christian in each household who should be so full of the joys of God's salvation that he could not help speaking it out on all fit occasions--this would be like planting a well-spring of water in every acre of earth's desert sands. How soon would the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose! How often has one such Christian set a whole community on fire with desire to get rid of their darkness and come forth into God's glorious light!

- 6. The spiritual joy of Christians is exceedingly useful to sinners. Sinners know that Christians ought to rejoice in God, and of course they are not surprised at all that they should. How impressive to the sinner to see that the Christian is at rest in God! Oh, he knows nothing of that peace himself; and the view of it as enjoyed by the Christian reveals his own desolation. What

sinner was ever in the habit of mingling in the society of Christians whose heart and lips are full of joy, without himself feeling unutterable yearnings of heart for such joys as these? I can well recollect that some of my earliest impressions of a serious nature, were occasioned by hearing a young man speak of his joy in God. I went home from that meeting weeping. I said to myself--that joy is rare; it is a joy worthy of a human soul. I walked along with many tears, and when alone, I sought a retired and dry place to kneel down and pray that God would give me what that young man had. All that I had ever heard of sermons and lectures had not made half so much impression as that young man's religious joy.

Sinners know that their own joy is a mean affair. Hence, when they see the Christian's joy, they can not help contrasting it with their own, and the result can scarcely fail of revealing to them their own wretched state.

These struggles of the sinner for joy are indeed altogether selfish. My prayers at the time alluded to were so; but yet they were useful, for they served to enforce conviction of the value of religion and of the worthlessness of everything short of it. The Psalmist understood the value of Christian joy. "Restore unto me," said he, "the joy of thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." He knew this would make a powerful impression on their minds, for good.

- 7. The absence of this spiritual joy is a great stumbling block to all classes. What a stumbling block to a church to have a minister who is perpetually in spiritual darkness and trouble! How can he lead on the sacramental host whose own heart is quailing with spiritual fears, or suffering under spiritual agonies for himself! And the more important the position a man holds, the more desirable it becomes that he should be full of the joy and peace which the Holy Ghost inspires. Deacons in a church; parents in a family; professors in a College:--how can men who hold such stations of responsibility ever think of acquitting themselves of their responsibilities without possessing grace enough to give them the joy of God's salvation?

In saying this I would not be understood to imply that Christians never have trials and sorrows; they will have them doubtless; but even in these very trials and sorrows, how precious will be the joys of God's salvation to their souls!

Especially is this joy of God's salvation indispensable to one who preaches the gospel! A man might preach something without it; but not the gospel. He might deliver moral essays, or might contend valiantly for his polemic creed; but as for preaching the vital matters of salvation, how can he if he knows nothing about them by experience? He needs such faith as brings peace; such communion of soul with God as necessarily brings joy of heart. And this is something more than being penitent; of course something more than being merely pious. The Psalmist knew that he was penitent, and yet he knew also that he needed something more. God had not yet revealed the light of his own face. Hence, when he had confessed and humbled himself before God, it still remained that he should pray--"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." David had known well what it was to be full of joy before God. He had danced for joy with all his might before the ark of the Lord, and often we find him preparing songs of joy and praise; but now, alas, his harp is silent and all unstrung! He has sinned grievously against God; a thick cloud has

come over his soul; and though he has confessed, yet still he has occasion to pray--"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." Why does he want these joys? Because without them he can not reach transgressors to any good purpose. What Christian does not know how to sympathize with David in this state of mind? Who has not known experimentally the state of those who have sinned, confessed, but still have the greatest occasion to ask God to restore to them the lost joys of His salvation? The soul cries out--"Lord, how can I live, shut out in darkness from thee? O, if thou canst, wilt thou not reveal thy reconciled face and restore again those lost joys of thy salvation?"

### **III. The conditions upon which this prayer can be answered.**

- 1. We must have a sense of our won sins, and their deep and damning guilt. I said that some of the elements in the Christian's joy do not exist in the joy of sinless beings in the universe of God. In the Christian's case it is indispensable that his joy should be preceded by a sense of sin and guilt. Else he cannot appreciate the grace of pardon--cannot really appreciate any thing about the gospel. He needs such a sense of sin as to understand how great a thing it is to be delivered from sin--rescued from its farther commission, and pardoned of its horrible guilt.
- 2. Confession of sin, and real repentance. God would be but poorly employed in restoring the joys of salvation to one who has not repented.
- 3. Making restitution also, must be a condition, for this is essential to real repentance.
- 4. An apprehension of the atonement and way of acceptance. I have said that one might repent and yet not have this sense of restored joy. I know this to be the case; and I believe every Christian in this house knows it. In order to have this joy, we need a sense of pardon; but this is not all. We need such a sense of it and such a view of its mode as shall justify God--such a view as will show you that God is just in pardoning the sinner. The sinner in the state of mind supposed is not selfish; hence he desires God to be justified, and could not be happy to receive pardon in any way which he did not see would fully acquit and greatly glorify God. Hence, he needs to see that the gospel mode of pardon is such as most fully justifies and honors God. He needs to see that the atonement through Jesus Christ most perfectly answers all these great and most desirable ends. I do not believe it possible for a man to enter into the joys of God's salvation without some just notions of the atonement as the way in which God can be glorious in forgiving sin.
- 5. Another essential condition is the acceptance of Christ in the fullness of his relations. Unless we see what relations Christ sustains to us, and what He consequently can do for us, it is impossible that we can experience this joy. Unless we apprehend Christ's fullness, we cannot receive fully the joys of his salvation.
- 6. Another condition is universal confidence in God. If there be any one thing in which we have not confidence in God, there will be chafing and trouble. The soul is not right towards God.

Again, an entire renunciation of self is a condition. Whoever does not renounce himself, cannot have this joy.

- 7. You must renounce all idols. What would you think of God if He were to give this joy to those who are sipping at every fountain of earthly pleasure, trying to find some little joy besides that from God?
- 8. There must also be a sympathy of will with God. Our will must be so thoroughly with his that we can go with Him in all He does, without the least reluctance or misgiving.

Again, subdued appetites and passions are essential; for while these are clamoring for indulgence, it is utterly impossible for the soul to experience the joys of God's salvation.

- 9. Another condition is the indwelling Spirit of God; for who will have his appetites subdued, or indeed, who will fulfill any of these conditions without the Spirit?
- 10. It is essential that there should be a clear medium of communication between our souls and God. A man who has not communion with God cannot have the joys of gospel salvation. When from any reason the soul is shut out from God and the communion is not free, but God hides his face, then the soul cannot rejoice in the joy of his great salvation.

#### **IV. What is implied in offering such a prayer acceptably?**

- 1. A sense of our necessities; for until we feel our wants we never shall pray with any fervency. So long as we are sipping at every accessible fountain of earthly pleasure and getting up for ourselves poor broken cisterns besides, we are never likely to come to the gospel fountain. The soul needs to have a sense of its great necessities--a consciousness of being altogether empty, and hence a conviction of its need of access to the divine fountain, or there is not hope it will ever come to this fountain for the waters of life.
- 2. Another requisite is a sense of dependence on God for this state of mind. Persons may feel their need of the blessing, and yet may not realize their dependence on God. But this feeling of dependence must exist in the mind before one can deeply and earnestly rest upon God for the blessing. Men need to know and to realize that although they have power to repent, yet they can not get access to this fountain of divine pleasures without God's help. His angel must come down and trouble the waters of this "house of mercy;" and lend us a kind hand to help us down therein, then our soul is made whole of "whatsoever disease it had."
- 3. Acceptable prayer implies fulfilling the conditions. Else we only tempt God. He who knows the revealed conditions, and yet prays God to bestow the blessing without fulfilling the conditions, insults God to His face. It amounts to demanding that God should recede from his expressed conditions; a thing which of course He never can do, and which no man can even impliedly ask Him to do without abusing his God exceedingly.

Especially is it important that this prayer be not selfish. The soul must be consecrated to God, fully purposed to use the blessing if obtained, and if not obtained, yet to use everything it has, for the glory of God and the highest good of man. So David felt. "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." There is the greatest danger in asking for spiritual joy, that our hearts will be merely selfish in it,

instead of disinterestedly seeking to glorify God in all things, and even with the religious joy and peace which He may graciously impart to us.

- 4. A sense of its great value is another requisite. This should be coupled with a deep sense of ill-desert. Combining together these two sentiments in their great strength, you then have a state of mind in which you are in small danger of seeking in vain.
- 5. In connection with these, there must be great confidence in God's willingness to bestow the blessings sought. David seems to have had this.
- 6. Also a willingness to have God use all the necessary means to open the way for this result. There may be a great many springs of earthly joy to be dried up; many idols to be removed; many a cup of earthly pleasure to be dashed, before we shall be prepared to receive in our souls the joy of God's salvation. Consequently there must be on our part a willingness to have God do anything He pleases with us to prepare the way in our souls. Unless we are thus willing that God should take his own course, we are making conditions for God which show that we are real hypocrites. We are trying to get the joy of holiness without the holiness itself.
- 7. There must also be a willingness to leave the time, the way, and the conditions of conferring the blessing wholly in the disposal of Infinite Wisdom. All must be left in his hands with most unqualified submission, ourselves ready to do or suffer anything that is necessary, that we may most glorify God.
- 8. There must also be a fixed purpose to make a wise and holy use of the blessings which we receive. It must be in our heart to use this blessing wholly for God. Unless we pray for it with the sincere intention of asking it thus for God, we have no reason whatever to expect it. A man would be but poorly employed in praying for this blessing to put it under a bushel. The great Giver would fain make His goodness known; and why should not you lend your aid in so noble an enterprise, for an end so glorious?

If God fills your cup you must be willing to pass it round and let all others be refreshed from the same fountain. Show them where the fountain is, and how good its waters are. They do not know much about these things, and they need such hints as you can easily give them, if your own heart is full of that divine joy.

## **REMARKS.**

1. Many professors of religion know nothing of the joys of God's salvation. I recollect to have been impressed with this long before my conversion. At that time I was in the habit of conversing with Christians about their own experience. Having much curiosity on this subject I felt free to inquire about it and took frequent opportunities to do so. It was with me then, a matter of speculation, being then, as now, much struck with the apparent fact that so few Christians had much real joy in God. The impression was often made on my mind that most Christians were wretched, unhappy, muttering, grumbling, and full of trouble. Hence the conviction ripened more and more on my mind that they had little or no real joy in God. They might have repented of sin, and lost their burden at the cross; but yet they seemed not to know much if anything about the joys of God's salvation. On this subject they



were generally dumb, having little or nothing to say of the salvation of God, and the light of His countenance.

2. A great many professors of religion seem not to care for this blessing. Scrambling after dress or money; as anxious after worldly good as if there were no other good for them to seek; as anxious for this world as if God had told them to seek first the kingdom of this world and its good things; so they press on, running to this concert, to that show or party of pleasure, always lusting after something sensual and worldly;--such are their pursuits, and such of course is their character. They had much rather go to a circus than into their closet, or to a prayer meeting. They cannot imagine how any man can wish to go like Francis Xavier into his closet, and spend seven hours at once in such deep and holy communion with God that his countenance glowed like an angel's; they can form no just conception of the attractiveness of such a scene and of such employments.

3. When a Christian has really tasted this joy in God, and then subsequently has been deprived of it, he will go with his head bowed down like a bulrush. He looks as if he had lost all the friends he ever had. Having once drank of the sweet waters of life, O how insipid are the draughts of earthly joy! I do not mean to imply by this that Christians cannot enjoy earthly things. They can. None can enjoy earthly good with half so solid a relish as they when they can have God in all their earthly good, and take all as His gift, and from His hand. But let a man who has experienced these joys, once get away from God, away into sin as David did, and his peace and joy are spoiled; he looks ashamed before God and before men; he cannot hold up his head. If you meet him in a Christian spirit, he cannot look you in the face, especially if you show him that your heart is full of the joys of God's salvation. How often have I seen this; and so probably have many of you. Look around you. There is a professed Christian, fallen into sin. Let one arise before him, full of the joys of God's salvation, and Oh, how self-condemned he is; how full of agony and trouble! Poor man; he is far from God and can find no rest there.

4. Some persons care just enough for these joys to pray for them selfishly, but in no other way. Most of you who are present today will recollect that I stated a fact here some weeks since which may apply well here. A man with whom I was boarding in a season of revival, being greatly troubled about his own spiritual state, said to me--"What would you think of a man who prays for the Spirit of God week after week, but never gets it?" My reply was, "I should think the man prayed selfishly. I presume that is all the trouble. The devil might pray for spiritual joy in the very same way--his only end being his own spiritual enjoyment. The Psalmist, said I, did not pray so. He did indeed pray that God would restore to him the lost joys of his salvation; but his motives in it were not selfish; no, for he adds--"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.'" This seemed to the man a hard saying, and he went away, as he afterwards told me, in great anger, and prayed that God would kill him. A little more thought however, together with the melting power of the Spirit, subdued him, and he became as docile and humble as a lamb.

So it often happens that men want God to meet their selfishness; and when they find He does not, they have often a long struggle before they really humble themselves, so as to meet God on his own ground.

5. Many think that all caring for the joy of God's salvation is necessarily selfish. They do not realize

the value of this joy to the church, to God, and to the world, and hence they cannot realize that any other than selfish motives can induce Christians to pray for it. Consequently, with these views of the selfish character, they pray for it very little, if at all.

Again, few realize the importance of having this joy of the Lord in their souls. They seem not to appreciate its important bearings upon the interests of vital godliness.

Many Christians have special seasons and states of mind in which they are very desirous to have this blessing; but on the whole they are unwilling to yield up the sources of their carnal joys. They would gladly have both if they could; but since they cannot be, they cleave to the carnal, and forgo the spiritual. A most unwise, most wretched, and most guilty choice!

Again, spiritual joy often abounds when all other sources of joy are dried up. By this I do not mean that joy in God precludes all enjoyment of the world and its pleasures; for this is very far from being true. My meaning is that when worldly sources of pleasure are cut off from us or are dried up, then God comes in to fill the void with richer spiritual joys. Poverty and losses may have withdrawn from you many of the comforts of life; God can make his grace to abound so much the more, that your soul shall rejoice exceedingly in the exchange. Sickness may have robbed you of the joy which health affords; but God can make your soul prosper and be in health to such a degree that your physical loss shall be more than counterbalanced by your spiritual gain. God knows how to fill up the chasms of earthly happiness which his providence makes. Often He makes them for the very purpose apparently of filling them with the more precious material of his own spiritual blessings. He sometimes finds himself under the necessity of cutting off every source of earthly joy in order that He may shut us up utterly to Himself. When He finds us unwilling to let go of earthly idols, God leaves them to their own choice, saying--"They have loved idols and after them they will go." "They are joined to their idols; let them alone." But if we are willing to serve God, then we may find sources of spiritual joy springing up in the most barren of earth's deserts. Nothing earthly is so desolate that God cannot gladden it with the intermingled joys of his salvation.

On the other hand if you will selfishly cleave to earth, and thrust away the proffered joys of God's love, then if He would save you there remains no alternative but to scatter desolation broadcast over all your earthly joys. God will blight them if He can; and surely He who has the resources of the universe at his command can never lack the means of filling your cup with dregs of wormwood and gall. It would be the worst form of folly if you should compel your loving Father to do this as a last resort in order to save and bless your soul.

Again, very few realize how much the absence of spiritual joy and of its manifestations, will dishonor God. Few realize how great a stumbling block it is to men to see professed Christians go about with a heart all sorrowful, bowed down and hatefully selfish; no trust, or almost none, in God; no joy in the light of his countenance, and no preparation of heart for doing anything efficiently in God's service. It is a living reproach to the name of Jesus, that his people should appear thus before either their brethren or the world.

Legalists are greatly stumbled at those who possess the joy of God's salvation. Legalists are never happy in themselves; always in a strait-jacket, every muscle drawn up with a tightness never to be

relaxed; they don't know about such a joyous state of mind. They see a great many things that look suspicious. When they see souls rejoicing greatly in the Lord--O they don't know about that. If a Christian's soul triumphs in his God--alas, they say to themselves, what can that mean? There is nothing like that in my religion!

There is quite too much cheerfulness often in other people's religion to suit their taste, or to tally with their own experience. Never having had any experience in such joys as those, they are greatly scandalized.

So it seems to have been with one of David's wives, when she saw him running and dancing before the ark of the Lord in the overflowings of his joy. Indeed, thought she, this looks very unbecoming for a king--for the king of Israel. Christians of a somber, heavy countenance, who have never known anything of the gladsome joy of holy love--who cannot explain to themselves even the peaceful look of the saint who is communing with God; and above all who know not the first element of his state of mind whose soul pours forth the gushing tides of its affection before God as if it could never express the half it feels--those who look on amazed at such manifestations because they know nothing of them in their own experience will doubtless be greatly stumbled. But notwithstanding all their stumbling, if this spiritual joy is sustained by a holy consistent life, it cannot fail to exert its power upon their hearts. They maybe at first offended; but soon they must see that there is both reason and reality in the peaceful joy of those who walk humbly with God. O Lord, they will be compelled to say, I don't know that experience. There is something to which I am a stranger. I must know what that is. I doubt whether my religion is worth a straw. Sure I am that it gives me no joy in the Lord like what I see in those other Christians.

Few things are a greater curse than a legal state of mind. It is often as bad as open wickedness, if not worse. Often it is such a misrepresentation of religion as makes the little children more afraid of such a religious man than of a fiend. Does he recommend religion? He could not possibly disparage and misrepresent it more than he does. Better far if he were never thought to be a Christian at all; for then his somber, morose and harsh spirit would be ascribed to its true cause--the unselfishness of his heart, and the utter absence of the gentle spirit of gospel love.

Many fail of this joy because they do not ask for it. Will you, my hearers, lose it through lack of prayer and of faith? It is too choice a blessing to be missed for such a reason.

## **Jesus, A Savior from Sinning**

Lecture VI  
April 25, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Matt. 1:21: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

In discussing fundamentally the subject presented in the text, it is pertinent to remark,

*I. That salvation from sin is the great want of humanity.*

*II. The facts already adduced are always assumed in the Bible.*

*III. Why is it that so many men are not saved at all?*

*IV. Why is it that so many are saved only in part?*

### **I. That salvation from sin is the great want of humanity.**

On this point there can be no mistake. Whatever else may be controverted or denied, this cannot be. Universal observation combines with universal consciousness to attest that this is a stubborn fact--salvation from sin is the great want of our sinning race. Nothing is more true than that as a race, men are sinners. All men know each other to be sinners, and of course what all know to be true of each one, and what each one knows to be true of all, must be a matter of universal knowledge.

I said, whatever else is true or is not true, this is true; that men need salvation from sin. The reason of this need is that they are sinners and as sinners, they are utterly lost to happiness, unless they can be saved from their sins. No man can be honest and yet deny this. This one truth is forever settled and known by all men.

By being saved from sin I do not mean pardon; for every man knows that pardon, without salvation from sinning, would not really save; for if a man were pardoned, but were still given up to the working of his sinful passions and selfish spirit, he would make for himself a hell even in heaven; nay more, it is undoubtedly true that heaven would be the severest form of hell to the unsaved in heart. There can be no heaven without holiness, and the change from sin to such holiness as fits for heaven is exceedingly great. A world of selfish beings thrown together anywhere would be unutterably miserable.

### **II. The facts already adduced are always assumed in the Bible.**

- 1. The Bible throughout assumes these facts, as if everybody knew them. It assumes that all men need to be saved from sin and have sense enough to know their need. Consequently it brings forward a plan by which through Jesus Christ they may be saved from sin. This is the great burden of the message sent to us from God in His revealed word.

Our text speaks of Jesus Christ. The angel said to Joseph; Mary "shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

- 2. The Bible represents Jesus as having undertaken this work. It represents His name as being prophetic of the work He came to do. He is a Savior. His work is denoted in His very name. So the Bible uniformly represents Him, as the following instances will show.

It is said that "in Him shall all fullness dwell." "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." "Who is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." "Who is able to keep us from falling," and "to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

- 3. The Bible also represents Him as being perfectly willing to do this work, as coming for the very purpose of doing it; as making this His errand and business in the world. He is ready to undertake this work for all who will meet the conditions. The Bible represents Him as waiting to enter upon it and anxious to effect it in the case of all sinners and of every individual sinner. "Behold," says He, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me." He thus presents Himself to be accepted by each and every sinner, "If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him." And this is only one of a large class of passages which represent Jesus as waiting to accomplish this work of salvation in the sinner. He waits to be allowed to come in. He knocks, and knocks; but then does not force the door; He waits till it be opened in the proper way, and His entrance is invited.

Yet does the Bible most fully represent Him as being anxious to gain admittance--as "waiting at the door of the sinner till His head is wet with the dew and His locks with drops of the night."

O He would show us that He has the greatest desire conceivable to save us from all our sins. His heart is oppressed with sorrow and grief because sinners will not consent, and because He must therefore give them over to final ruin. Hear Him cry--"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned with Me, my repentings are kindled together. O, that there were such an heart in them, and that they would consider their latter end!" In fact the Bible is full of the most earnest and affecting testimonies of this sort.

- 4. Moreover, the Bible represents Jesus Christ as taking the greatest pains to secure the consent of mankind to His terms and proposals of salvation. For this end He places before them the humiliation to which He has voluntarily subjected Himself--the sufferings He has endured, and His waiting attitude now to do for them all they can possibly need to have done for themselves. O could He only make them believe all this, and appreciate it all as the fruit of infinite compassion for their souls!
- 5. The Bible also represents Christ as hearing and granting all the petitions of really praying souls. Christ Himself says--"everyone that asketh receiveth." He does not merely say--he shall receive; but he receiveth. It is asserted as a fact--a universal fact--from which there can be no exception.

To vary the figure, He says, the door is opened to everyone that knocks. None can fail of gaining admittance who really knocks. Christ does not say that everyone who supposes himself to ask, receives; or who supposes himself to knock, shall find the door opened to Him; but everyone who really asks, receives. This is all He can be understood to mean.

### **III. Why is it that so many men are not saved at all?**

It is a fact beyond dispute that some who hear and know the gospel, have no part or lot in its blessings. Why is this?

- 1. Many do not care to be saved from their sins. This is not the kind of salvation which they would have. If they could be saved in their sins, they would like that full well. But they have no desire to be saved from their sins. The punishment they would gladly avoid if they conveniently could; but the presence of sin and its daily practice is no source of grief or trouble to them.
- 2. Some have a sort of desire, but yet are not willing to be saved from sin. They have seen so much of the hatefulness of sin as to wish to be saved from it; just as many drunkards wish to be saved from their cups, but you cannot for their life get them to sign a temperance pledge. This is often the case with sinners. They mistake their desires, for a willingness; but they are not really willing. They often pretend they are willing, but if you push them you will find they are not. They will draw back and will not go straight forward in the gospel path of faith in Christ Jesus and of self-renunciation.
- 3. Many mistake entirely the nature of this salvation, and hence fail of embracing and securing its blessings. They are looking for salvation from punishment and from hell. Hence the thing they have their eye upon is not a pure heart, but a hope. They want to be rid of their fears. They would fain have a salvation, but not this, which consists in deliverance from their sins. They would fain have a Savior, but not Jesus, for He saves men from their sins. They cannot get Him to do the thing they want done; for He will save none from hell who will not be first saved from sin. Hence many fail because they are trying to make Jesus Christ serve with their sins. Their effort is to induce Jesus to take them in their sins, and make them--in this state, His people, and give them heaven. Their essential mistake is that they seek salvation from punishment and not from sin.
- 4. Others are so self-righteous that they really depend on their outward morality for salvation, and of course they cannot take Christ as their Savior. It is astonishing to see how many such are found even among those who hear the gospel preached in its purity. They reason in their own hearts--"If this or that professor is saved, I shall be, too; for I am as good as he is. My life is as fair and unblemished as the life of any professed Christians within my knowledge." They are blessing themselves continually that they are no worse than some Christians are. No wonder that such persons never come to Christ to be saved from their sins.
- 5. Many are not expecting to be saved without being in some way interested in Christ; but they seek this interest by means of their religious duties or works, and not by simple faith. Their works are after all works of law; and what should be especially noted, they are works of law, put either in the place Christ should occupy, or done as a means of securing the blessings which

are to come from Christ. Hence they are exceedingly strict and precise in their observance of the Sabbath, and of all the external duties of religion, and by this means they hope to get the salvation of the gospel. They know indeed that their hearts are not filled with the love of God. They know that theirs is not a religion of heart-rest, of joy in the Holy Ghost, and deep peace of conscience. They find in themselves none of that which lifts them above the world. Most strict are they in their outward life, but without a particle of true religion. They forget that religion belongs to the heart, and that all their duties are nothing but self-righteousness. A man might keep every one of God's commandments in the letter, from the day of his birth to the day of his death, and yet know no more of the real gospel of Christ than a heathen does. All his observance of law might not give him even the first idea of salvation by faith in Christ. I have often thought of what Paul said to the Christians at Rome on this point; "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." The Gentiles who had no law or righteousness of their own, attained readily to the righteousness which is by faith. But Israel who was following hard after a mode of righteousness, failed of receiving the gospel. Why this failure? The apostle gives us the clue to the answer: "They sought it not by faith, but as it were by works of law." Their self-righteousness prevented their getting a correct estimation of the gospel. The gospel did not take hold of them; it could gain no access to their souls.

But the Gentiles who had no law and no self-righteousness to stand in their way, readily apprehended the gospel.

Now many persons brought up in pious families and under gospel light are in a state similar to ancient Israel. They have too much good morality and self-righteousness to come to Jesus just as if they had none at all; and yet all this time they know that their own hearts are a moral desolation.

- 6. Many are endeavoring to get faith by works. They see their need of faith, and they think to get faith not by simply believing, but by setting about a series of works. When they have practiced works long enough, they seem to suppose that faith will be wrought out as a product of their working.

Now this is strange indeed! As if they could perform duty without faith, and as if their duties, performed without faith, would be so acceptable to God that He would give them faith as their reward for duties wrought out in the spirit of unbelief! As if God had never said--"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin!" How marvelous that men should think to get faith by mocking God, and by sinning against God! How is it possible that men with our Bible in their hands should hope to get salvation without faith, or faith by works and without believing? Yet so it is. Instead of resting right down upon the divine promises by simple faith, they go to work to get faith by works of righteousness! Nothing can be more plain than that such persons misapprehend the gospel scheme of salvation by grace alone, through faith in a crucified Savior.

#### IV. Why is it that so many are saved only in part?

It is a fact too obvious to be denied or doubted that many Christians stumble and fall in their Christian course. They show that they have not thoroughly taken hold of this Jesus who saved His people from their sins. Why is this failure of real salvation?

- 1. Some apprehend their necessities only in part. They have only a partial view of their real need of such a Savior from sin as Christ is. They are so far blind to their necessities that they do not lay hold of Christ with an active, earnest faith. They almost assume that they are already saved, and thus entirely misconceive their own real case.
- 2. Others apprehend Christ only in part, having very imperfect notions of His offices and character. It would seem that the great mass of professed Christians are looking to Christ to forgive their sins and secure their pardon; but this is all. They look for no sanctifying influence or agency from Jesus Christ. In place of this they resort to a notion of Christ's imputed righteousness. It is remarkable that so many Christians have settled down in this notion of an imputed rather than imparted righteousness; on the notion that Christ, instead of imparting, imputes righteousness to His people; instead of begetting in them personal holiness, makes over to them the credit of His own holiness, while they are yet unsanctified; instead of making them holy in fact, only accounts them holy in law, while they are really sinful. This is a most strange and singular doctrine indeed. I am well aware it is not singular in the sense of being uncommon or out of fashion; but it surely is most strange in view of either Bible teachings, or the essential nature of things. Its advocates must read our text thus--not "He shall save His people from their sins"--but, shall save them from the punishment of their sins. Salvation from punishment is to them the essential thing in the gospel. They do not, to be sure, expect men to be saved without holiness; but they suppose that death secures deliverance from sin; and then to finish the work, Jesus imputes to them His own righteousness. This they deem all-sufficient as both fitness and title to heaven.

Said a Presbyterian minister of high standing in his church--"I never heard of such a thing as this--that Christ is the sanctification of the soul!" Horrible! Horrible!! This, a leading man in the Presbyterian church, and yet has not heard that Christ is a Sanctifier of His people--seems never to have heard that Jesus "saves His people from their sins!"

This class of Christians have some notion that there is a Holy Ghost who will have some agency in sanctifying His people just at death, or just after death--somehow, and somewhere near the eventful point of death, but just how or when is certainly not made very definite in their teachings. How it is done in cases where death supervenes suddenly, or where disease arrests all sane action of the mind, I believe is not distinctly stated. Yet death is relied on as the great sanctifier! The Christian in the prospect of death is encouraged and animated with the hope that his deliverance from sin is just at hand! All this is said as confidently and solemnly as if the Bible had said, not of the child Jesus, but of death,--"Death's name shall be called Jesus--for death shall save you from your sins;" or as if God had never said--"Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

O how great and how prevalent is this difficulty--men apprehend Christ only in part, and



seem incapable of apprehending Him in all His precious relations!

- 3. Many who have known something of the gospel live on their resolutions, and not on Christ. They are not perhaps aware of this fact; but if they ever come to depend on Christ, they will see that they have been trying to brace themselves up on the strength of their own resolutions.
- 4. Many depend on faith without any resolution. Theirs is a puny, sickly faith, void of energy or activity. Now both these last mentioned classes are utterly mistaken; both those who depend on resolutions without faith, and those who trust in faith without resolutions. Both equally miss the very thing which the gospel requires, and which alone can ensure success--namely, resolving and executing in the promised strength of Jesus Christ.

Again, many who know something about the necessity of having a pure heart, are yet seeking comfort without purity. They give themselves up to pray for comfort and happiness, while all the time they are inflicting self-torture by the indulgence of sin. They act as if they supposed that by His own arbitrary act God could make them happy and fill their souls with blessedness, while yet their hearts are full of sin; than which, no more rank delusion or essential absurdity was ever broached by mortals.

Yet again, some want to be delivered from sin because they want the personal comfort of being sanctified. Inasmuch as their desires extend not at all beyond themselves, and are hence purely selfish, there is good reason why they get so little of that blessing which they so selfishly seek.

- 5. Many satisfy themselves with the hope of a future salvation only. They are satisfied with the hope of its coming at length, and can forego the present possession without any painful solitudes. It is enough for them that they shall ultimately go to heaven, and they seem not to be straitened with the intense desire of entering into the deep rest of the gospel at once. When persons begin to be pressed strongly with the desire for present and full salvation, there is hope for them that deliverance is near. When like the prodigal son, they begin to be in want; then they become painfully conscious that there is a mighty famine in the land where they are, and that starvation stares them in the face; so that when their thoughts revert to the bread in plenty, in their father's house, there is a deep yearning of desire and a stirring up of purpose--then there begins to be hope in their case. But many content themselves with the hope of future salvation, and have no strong conceptions of the power of Jesus to secure for them a present salvation. Thus they slide along, and never know half the present power, the present value and present blessedness of gospel salvation.
- 6. Many draw back through fear of the present consequences of being pure from sin. They see, or think they see the trials to which it may subject them, and they shrink before these trials--as if the blessing of a pure heart must cost too much!
- 7. Many think their sins are forgiven, and seem to satisfy themselves with the hope that they are justified before God. They know they live in sin, but they strangely imbibe the impression that they are accepted of God, are His real children, and have a well-founded hope of eternal life. Of this class, one thing must be certain; they have not one particle of religion. If they can content

themselves and bless their souls that they are justified, and then live along without a devoted life and without a penitent, grateful heart, drawn to God evermore by a sense of His pardoning grace, they have not the first particle of real religion. For how can this state of mind consist with real love to God? How can there be real love to God in the soul, which yet shall not "constrain" the soul to love God and do His will?

- 8. Multitudes who have professed religion have lost their path, have got out of the way; are thrown off their track, and are now wandering like boys in the woods; going round and round forever in a circle perhaps when they think they are steering a straight line and in the right direction. Whoever has been really lost in the woods so as to lose utterly all his points of compass and to have his head completely turned, will understand the situation of multitudes of professed Christians. They once knew what it was to believe, and rejoice in hope--to live under the smiles of God's countenance; but they have sinned; they have got out of the way; for days and weeks, they are lost in the wilderness of sin. Dark clouds and dense fogs alternate around their path, and they feel sadly desolate. They seem to be as much at a loss what to do, as if they had never known the way of life. A darkness that can almost be felt gathers around and seem to press its thick gloom hard upon them on every side. I recollect to have seen the remark in some of the old writers, that "it is one of the hardest things in religion for a backslider to return to God." At first I thought this a strange remark, and said to myself--"How can this be?" But subsequent observation and reflection showed me that there is much truth in it, and I have seen many striking manifestations of its truth. So doubtless have you. You have seen professed Christians get out of the way; begin to struggle and flounder; plunge into the mire, and only get in the deeper for all their struggles to get out. They even begin to doubt whether they were ever converted, and perhaps even whether anybody else is, not even excepting those who are most esteemed for piety. They may next question whether there is any such thing as conversion, or whether the Bible be true. They find no God to pray to, and when they attempt to pray, it is as if they were speaking into the vacant air. When Christians get away from God they often go farther into doubts and skepticism than they did before they were converted at all. Some dreadful cases of this sort are a warning--a portentous warning against the perils of backsliding.
- 9. But it often happens that those who go not nearly so far as this, and who never doubt the truth of the Bible, yet get away so far that they lose their way and do not know at all how to get back. This leads me to say that when these persons become anxious and perplexed, one reason why they fail of finding their path is, they seek it without their guide. They think they must get back on to the right track before they can have Christ to help them. They think they are seeking the track in order to find Christ there. Like a man lost in the wilderness, who is trying to get out somewhere, so that he can get a guide, he pitches into a slough on this side, and into a thorn bush on that side, and never thinks to ask himself--How can I hope to get out of this dreadful swamp, in this pitchy darkness too--without a guide? So the Christian sets himself to work self-righteously with all his might, to get relief. Like the lost traveler, he runs; he shouts at the very top of his voice and makes the deep glens of the forest echo with his cries; he rushes into thickets and brambles, and plunges into sloughs of deep mire, and wears out his strength in vain: alas, it does not seem to occur to him to ask--How can I ever extricate myself from this dreadful condition without my guide? See him; his heart struggles intensely; he cries, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" All is discouragement. What is the matter? The trouble is--he has no guide. Where is his guide? Where is his Jesus? Has Jesus lost sight of His dear child? O

no; He is following hard and close after him; crying in his ears--"Lo, this is the way, walk ye in it." He draws near; He offers to the lost wanderer His own hand to help and to guide. Alas, that the poor and the guilty wanderer will rely on his own wisdom to find the way himself, and on his strength to get out of his deep Slough of Despond; and will not cast himself wholly and at once on the offered help of his present Savior!

How many times have I seen people in this state, pressed with trouble, till they actually give up all for lost, and then bethink themselves of one more last resort--just to leave themselves simply in the hands of Jesus: then salvation comes! They return to the first simple thing of the gospel--let go of self-dependency and cast themselves on Christ--or rather--drop in the sinkings of their self-despair--drop into Christ alone and there find help! Then they see the pole star of hope, peering through the darkness of their despair.

- 10. In all this I am speaking of things that I know; for I can well recollect being in this state of mind myself. I was striving to get the salvation of the gospel without Jesus. I had not forgotten that there was a Jesus, but I was conscious of not enjoying His presence and His aid; and the deep inquiry in my heart was, Where shall I find Him? While thus sitting and deeply musing with myself to know why I did not get hold of the gospel, those words of Isaiah came to me--"I will lead the blind by a way which they know not." I saw at a glance that my trouble was--a want of my guide. I had spent many days and hours trying to get hold of salvation. This passage came home to me as if sent on purpose to meet my case. "Now," said I, "the remedy has come. I have been trying to get out of my entanglements without my guide." Here is the explanation. "I have been blind, and I have not taken hold of His hand who says, 'I will lead the blind by a way which they know not.' O let me now take hold of Christ, just where I am, here in this deep and dark wilderness, and all will be well. He is on my right hand and I need not fear."

Again, many do not lay hold of Christ because they totally misapprehend the way, and are trying to do something else first. Instead of committing their whole souls to Christ, they are trying to save themselves. Hence they run hither and thither--every where else but to Christ alone. They do not seem to understand that Jesus is really the Savior from sin, and that they have only to commit themselves to Him at once, just as they are. They seem to have lost the idea that Jesus must be received for just what He is--a Savior from sin; and that they must renounce themselves and receive Him--saying--I never shall keep myself--I renounce forever the expectation of doing anything without laying hold on Thee;--Lord Jesus, hold me up; the work is Thine; I depend on Thee to do it, and on Thee alone will I rest henceforth and forever.

What Christian does not know by his own experience what it is to be thrown into circumstances of great trial, in which the soul is fully brought to say--"Lord, I can not hold myself up at all; I must sink without Thee; Lord, save, or I perish!"

## REMARKS.

1. Many have hope who are not really saved in any proper sense of the word. They are neither saved from sin now, nor will they be saved from hell hereafter.

2. No one has reason to hope for heaven any further than he is really saved from sin.
3. They who possess the religion of the gospel and yet are not sanctified, virtually bring up an evil report against the gospel. They say, "I am a Christian, but I know that I am not saved from sin. I embrace a gospel which professes to save from sin, you see in me how much its professions are worth." What must be the influence of such a testimony?
4. When a Christian commits himself to Jesus to save from sin, it is well for him to use this argument in prayer; "Lord, it will dishonor Thee if Thou dost not save me from all sin. I have trusted in Thee; I do now take hold of Thy promises; let them be fulfilled in my case, and let all men seeing what Thy grace has done for me, know Thy salvation."
5. Some seem not to have in view Christ's honor, but their own. They think they shall disgrace themselves if they do not overcome temptation; but they do not feel that the greatest evil of all is that they will thus dishonor Christ.
6. If any man will believe, he shall see no other difficulty. No obstacle can possibly be in his way to shut off the power of the gospel from his soul, when once he has embraced the sinner's Savior by a living faith.
7. The great difficulty now is for the Savior to persuade men to believe, and to cast themselves on Him by a perpetual self-renunciation and a perpetual dependence. Let me ask you, my hearers, how many of you can testify that this is the case with yourselves: that in your own individual case, Jesus has to your certain knowledge been laboring to present Himself before you in such inviting forms as should inspire faith in Himself; but He has labored almost, or perhaps altogether in vain.
8. Half-way believers are the greatest stumbling-blocks in religion. They profess to embrace Christ, and to be religious, and yet fail of having grace enough to overcome sin. O! if they would only embrace Jesus, so as to be full of His Spirit, how greatly would they honor their Lord! As it is, how earthly-minded, sensual, and devilish do they become! No wonder they are ashamed to say that Jesus is a Savior from sin. How can they bear such testimony without reading themselves out of the pale of the heirs of heaven?

## **The Self-Hardening Sinner's Doom**

Lecture VII

May 9, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Pro. 29:1: "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

In discussing this subject I will consider:

*I. When and how persons are reprov'd*

*II. God's design in reprov'ing sinners*

*III. What it is to harden the neck*

*IV. What is intended by the sinner's being suddenly destroyed, and*

*V. What is implied in its being without remedy*

### **I. When and how persons are reprov'd.**

God's reproof of sinners may properly be considered as embracing three distinct departments; namely, reproof by means of His word, by means of His providence, and through His Spirit. My limits will allow me to make only a few suggestions under each of these heads.

- 1. God reprov's the sinner by His word whenever He in any way presents truth to his mind through His word, which shows the sinner His sins, which reveals to him duties that he is not performing. Any such revelation of duties not done, and of sins positively committed is reproof from God. Suppose you are a parent, and you point out to your child some neglect of duty. You by this act reprove your child. There may be connected with this some degree of threatening explicitly announced, or there may not be; in either case it is reproof for it must always be understood that threatening is involved. Hence if you call the attention of your child to anything in his conduct which displeases you, this very act is reproof. So when God by the revealed truth of His word calls the sinner's attention to the fact of sin, He virtually reprov's him, and this is God's intention in calling his mind to the fact of his sin.
- 2. By God's providence sinners are reprov'd, when their selfish projects are defeated. Sinful men are continually planning selfish schemes, and God often through His providence frustrates those schemes; and does so for the very purpose of reprov'ing their projectors. He could not rebuke them in a more emphatic way than this.

Sinners often form ambitious projects. The student seeks for himself a great name as a scholar; in other spheres, men seek the renown of the warrior, or the civilian--their aspiration being to enroll their names high above their fellows on the pillar of fame; but God in His providence blasts their hopes, frustrates their plans, and would fain make them see that they had better by far get their names written in the Lamb's book of Life. So He blots out their name on Ambition's scroll as fast as they can write it there; as if He would show them their folly, and allure them to write it where no power can ever erase it.

Again, it often happens that men by means of their selfishness become involved in difficulty; perhaps by a selfish use of their property, or by a selfish indulgence of their tongues; and God springs His net upon them, and suddenly they are taken, and find themselves suddenly brought up to think of their ways, and to experience the mischiefs of their selfish schemes. How often do we see this! Men make haste to be rich, and start some grasping scheme of selfishness for this purpose; but God suddenly springs His net upon them--blasts their schemes, and sets them to thinking whether there be not a "God in heaven who minds the affairs of men."

Another man finds himself entangled in lawsuits, and his property melts away like an April snow; and another pushes into some hazardous speculation--till the frown of the Almighty rebukes his folly.

As men have a thousand ways to develop their selfishness, so God has a thousand ways to head them back in their schemes and suggest forcibly to their minds that "this their way is their folly." In all such cases men ought to regard themselves as taken in the net of God's providence. God meets them in the narrow way of their selfishness, to talk with them about the vanity and folly of their course.

Everything which is adapted to arrest the attention of men in their sins may be regarded as a providential reproof. Thus, when God comes among sinners and cuts down some of their companions in iniquity, how solemn often are those dispensations! Often have I had opportunity to notice these effects. Often have I seen how solemn the minds of sinners become under these reproofs of the Almighty. Their feelings become tender; their sensibilities to truth are strongly excited. Who can fail to see that such events are designed to arrest the attention, and to rebuke and reprove them in their course of sin?

Every obstacle which God in His providence interposes in your way of selfishness, is His reproof. You can regard it in no other light.

God sometimes reproves sinners in a way which may be deemed more pungent than any other. I allude to that way which the Bible describes as heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head. A man abuses you; and in retaliation, you do him all the good in your power. Glorious retaliation! How it pours the scorching lava on his head! Now God often does this very thing with sinners. They sin against Him most abusively and most outrageously; and what does He do? How does He retaliate upon them? Only by pouring out upon them a yet richer flood of mercies! He pours new blessings into their lap till it runs over. He prospers their efforts for property; enlarges their families like a flock, and smiles on everything to which they put their hand. O how strangely do these mercies contrast with the sinner's abuse of his great Benefactor!

I can recollect some cases of this sort in my own experience, when the deep consciousness of guilt made me apprehend some great judgments from God. But just then, God seemed in a most remarkable manner to reveal His kindness and His love, and

to show the great meekness of His heart. O what a rebuke of my sins was this! Could anything else so break my heart all to pieces? Who does not know the power of kindness to melt the heart?

So God rebukes the sinner for his sins, and seeks to subdue his hard heart by manifested love.

Often sickness is to be regarded as a rebuke from God. When persons for selfish purposes abuse their health and God snatches it away, He in a most forcible way rebukes them for their madness.

Sometimes He brings the lives of men into great peril, so that there shall be but a step between them and death; as if He would give this movement of His providence a voice of trumpet-power to forewarn them of their coming doom. So various and striking are the ways of God's providence in which He reproveth men for their sins.

- 3. God also reproveth men by His Spirit. According to our Savior's teachings, the Spirit shall "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." Hence when sinners are specially convicted of sin they should know that God has come in His own person to reprove them. His Spirit comes to their very hearts, and makes impressions of truth and duty there--revealing to the sinner his own heart, and showing him how utterly at variance it is with a heart full of divine love.

Again, I have no doubt that in the present as in former days God reproveth men of their sins by means of dreams. If all the reliable cases of this sort which have occurred since the Bible was completed were recorded, I doubt not they would fill many volumes. I am aware that some suppose this mode of divine operation upon the human mind has long ago ceased; but I think otherwise. It may have ceased to be a medium of revealing new truth--doubtless it has; but it has not ceased to be employed as a means of impressing and enforcing truth already revealed. Sometimes the great realities of the coming judgment and of the world of doom are brought out and impressed upon the mind with overwhelming force by means of dreams. When this is the case, who shall say that the hand of the Lord is not in it?

A striking instance of a dream in which the hand of the Lord may be seen, is related by President Edwards. One of his neighbors, an intemperate man, dreamed that he died and went to hell. I will not attempt to relate here the circumstances that according to his dream occurred there. Suffice it to say that he obtained permission to return to earth on probation for one year, and was told distinctly that if he did not reform within one year, he must come back again. Upon this he awaked, under most solemn impressions of the dreadful realities of the sinner's hell. That very morning he went to see his pastor, Pres. Edwards, who said to him--"This is a solemn warning from God to your soul. You must give heed to it and forsake your sins, or you are a ruined man for eternity." The man made very solemn promises. When he had retired, Edwards opened his journal and made an entry of the principal facts; the dream, the conversation, and of course the date of these events. The inebriate reformed and ran well for a time; attended church and seemed

serious; but long before the year came around, he relapsed, returned to his cups, and ultimately, in a fit of intoxication opened a chamber door in a shop which led down an outside stairway--pitched headlong and broke his neck. Pres. Edwards turned to his journal and found that the one year from the date of his dream came round that very night, and the man's appointed time was up!

Now it is no doubt true that in general, dreams are under the control of physical law, and follow, though with much irregularity, the strain of our waking revelries; and for this reason many persons will not believe the hand of the Lord ever works in them; yet their inference is by no means legitimate; for God certainly can put His hand upon the mind dreaming as well as upon the mind waking, and multitudes of instances in point show that He sometimes does.

Again, God reproves the sinner whenever His Spirit awakens in the mind a sense of the great danger of living in sin. I have often known sinners greatly affected with the thought of this danger--the terrible danger of passing along through life in sin, exposed every hour to an eternal and remediless hell.

Now these solemn impressions are God's kind warnings, impressed on the soul because He loves the sinner's well-being, and would fain save him if He wisely can.

- 4. Often God's Spirit gives sinners a most impressive view of the shortness of time. He makes them feel that this general truth applies in all its power to themselves--that their own time is short, and that they in all probability have not long to live. I am aware that this impression sometimes originates in one's state of health; but I also know that sometimes there is good reason to recognize God's own special hand in it; and that men sometimes ascribe to nervous depression of spirits what should be ascribed directly to God Himself.

Again, God often makes the impression that the present is the sinner's last opportunity to secure salvation. I know not how many such cases have fallen under my own observation, cases in which sinners have been made to feel deeply that this is to be the very last offer of mercy, and these the very last strivings of the Spirit. My observation has taught me in such cases, to expect that the result will verify the warning--that this is none other than God's voice, and that God does not lie to man, but teaches most solemn and impressive truth. O how does it become every sinner to listen and heed such timely warnings!

Again, God's Spirit reproves sinners through their particular friends, or through gospel ministers. The affectionate admonitions of a brother or a sister, a parent or a child--a husband, or a wife, how often have these been the vehicle through which God has spoken to the soul! His minister also, God often employs for this purpose, so directing their minds that they in fact present to the sinner the very truth which fits his case, and he says, "It must be that somebody has told the minister all about my thoughts and feelings. Who can it be? I have never told anybody half so much of my heart as he has preached today." Now in such cases you may be safe in ascribing the fitting truth to the guiding hand of the divine Spirit. God is making use of His servant to reprove the sinner.



In all such cases as I have now been adducing, the reproofs administered should be ascribed to the Spirit of the Lord. In the same manner as God often in various ways administers consolation to penitent souls; so does He administer reproof to the impenitent. He has a thousand modes of making His voice audible to the sinner's conscience, and in His wisdom He always selects such as He deems best adapted to produce the desired result.

## II. The design of God in reproofing sinners.

- 1. One thing aimed at is to press them with the means of reform. A benevolent God sincerely desires their salvation and honestly does all He wisely can to secure this desired result. Hence His oft repeated reproofs and warnings. He will at least leave them without excuse. They shall never have it to say--"Oh, if we had only been forewarned of danger in those precious hours and years in which salvation was possible!" God designedly forestalls such exclamations by taking away all occasion, and putting in their mouths a very different one--"How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof!"
- 2. For this purpose God forewarns the sinner in season. Take the case of the man who dreamed of going down to hell. This dream was a loud and timely warning, adapted as well perhaps as any warning could be to induce reform and real repentance. It effectually took away all excuse or apology for persisting in his sins.
- 3. God designs by these reproofs to prepare men for the solemn judgment. It is in His heart to do them good--secure their seasonable--that is, their present, immediate repentance, so that they may meet their God in peace at last. His benevolence prompts Him to this course and He pursues it with all His heart.
- 4. It is no doubt equally true that the great God designs to be ready Himself for the final judgment--to meet every sinner there. He foresees that it will be important for Him there to show how He has dealt with each sinner--how often and how faithfully He has acted towards them the part of a kind Father. For this end every reproof ever given to a sinner will come in place. That dream recorded by Pres. Edwards will then be found recorded also by an angel's pen--to be revealed before all worlds then and there! This is one step in the process of parental efforts for reclaiming one sinner. The admonition so faithfully given by Pres. Edwards is another. All will go to show that truly God has been "long suffering towards sinners because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Thus will God in these providential warnings glorify Himself by exhibiting His true character and conduct. Nothing more is ever needful in order to glorify God than that His true character and conduct should be known as it is. The developments brought out at the judgment-day will thus reveal God, and of course will enhance His glory.

- 5. It is also interesting to see how God makes one warning create another. One providential event, sent as a judgment upon one sinner, multiplies its warning voice many fold as it falls upon the ears of hosts of other sinners. God cuts down one out of a class of hoary sinners, or of sinners in middle life, or in youth, and the event speaks in notes of solemn warning to hundreds. At Rome N.Y., several years ago a great revival occurred, the power of which rocked and rent

the stout hearts of many sinners, as the forest trees are rocked and rent by a tornado; but with it came some awful judgments revealing another form of the mighty hand of God. There were in that place a small class of hard drinkers who seemed determined to resist every call from God to repent. On the Sabbaths they would get together for drinking and reveling. On one of these occasions, one of their number suddenly fell down dead. Mr. Gillett, pastor of the church in that place, hastened to the spot, found the fallen man yet warm, but actually dead; and turning to the surrounding company of his associates, said, "There--who of you can doubt that this man has gone right down into hell!" This case made a deep and thrilling impression.

- 6. Another man, a famous apostate from a profession of religion, greatly opposed the revival. All at once God smote him with madness, and in his insane ravings he sought to take his own life. Men by turns had to watch him and restrain him by violence from committing suicide. Ere long he died a most horrid death--an awful warning to hardened apostates of their impending doom! So God tries to reform and save guilty men.

Again, God would manifest the utter madness, recklessness and folly of sinners. How striking it will appear in the judgment to see such a multitude of cases of reproof brought out to light, and then in connection to see the folly and madness of sinners in resisting so many reproofs! What a gazing-stock will sinners then be to the gathered myriads of intelligent beings! I have sometimes thought this will be the greatest wonder of the universe, to see the men who have displayed such perfect and long-continued infatuation in resisting so much love and so many kind and most heart-affecting appeals and reproofs! There they will stand monuments of the voluntary infatuation of a self-willed sinner! The intelligent universe will gaze at them as if they were the embodiment of all that is wondrous in madness and folly!

### **III. What is it to harden the neck?**

The figure is taken from the effect of the yoke on the bullock. Under constant pressure and friction the skin becomes callous, and past feeling. So with the sinner's conscience. His will has resisted truth until his constant opposition has hardened his moral sensibility, and his will rests in the attitude of rebellion against God. His mind is now fixed; reproofs which have heretofore chafed his sensibilities no longer reach them; friction and resistance have hardened his heart till he is past feeling. No dispensations of providence alarm him; no voice from God disturbs him; under all appeals to his reason or conscience his will is doggedly fixed; his moral feelings are insensible.

In this state, one might well say, the neck is hardened. The figure is pertinent. Who has not seen cases of this sort? Cases of men who have become so hardened that every reproof passes by them as if it touched them not--as if their moral sensibility had ceased to be any sensibility at all. I was struck the other day in conversing with a man of seventy-five, with his apparent insensibility to religious considerations. Are you a Christian, said I? "No; I don't know anything about them things--what you call Christians. I never murdered anybody, and I guess I have been as honest as most folks in my way."

But are you prepared to enter heaven--to go into another state of existence, and meet God face to face? "O, I don't believe anything about them things. If I only live about right, that's enough for me." I

could make no impression on such a mind as his; but God will make such men know something about these things by and by. They will change their tone ere long!

You sometimes see men in this condition who have given their intelligence up to embrace error, and have of free choice put darkness for light, and light for darkness; have stultified themselves in their own iniquities, and have said to evil, "Be thou my good." These have a seared conscience and a hard heart; their neck is an iron sinew, and they are fixed and fully set never to yield to God's most reasonable demands.

What then shall God do with such men? The text tells us. They "shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." This leads me to inquire.

#### **IV. What is meant by being suddenly destroyed?**

- 1. It implies their being cut off unexpectedly, in such an hour as they think not. We often speak of things as coming suddenly not because they come early in life, but because they fall upon men all suddenly and without being at all anticipated. In this sense the term suddenly seems to be used in our text. When some awful stroke of God's providence falls suddenly among us, smiting down some sinner in his sins, we say--What a sudden death! What an awful dispensation! So the Bible says, while they cry "Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape." No forewarning is given; no herald with trumpet-call proclaims the coming of that death-shaft; but all suddenly it cuts the air and strikes its blow! It has no need to strike another! Noiseless as the falling dew it comes; with velvet step it enters his bed-chamber; in such forms as no skill or power of man can baffle, it makes its approaches; death raises his bony arm--poises that never-erring shaft--in a moment, where is the victim? Gone; but where? The Bible says, he is "suddenly destroyed." Does this mean that he is borne up as on a chariot of fire to heaven? Where the wicked men of Sodom and Gomorrah--"set forth as an ensample" of the doom of the wicked--caught away up to heaven in mounting columns of fire and brimstone? If that had been, methinks all heaven would have fainted at the sight! Or were the people of the old world, who had all corrupted their way before God, and who were so full of violence and bloodshed that God could not endure them on earth--were they all swept by the flood into heaven, while poor Noah, scorned by the men of his generation, must toil many long years to prepare him an ark to save himself and family from being also destroyed into heaven?
- 2. What infinite trifling is this with God's words! To say that the sinner's destruction is only taking him by the shortest route and the quickest way into heaven! Does God say or mean this? No! If it had been His purpose to deceive men, He could not have taken a more direct and certain method than this, of calling the taking of men suddenly to heaven, destruction! No, this mode of using language belongs to Satan and not to God. We should never confound the broad distinction between the God of truth and the Father of lies!

#### **V. What is meant when this destruction is said to be "without remedy?"**

- 1. That this destruction can not be arrested. It comes with resistless and overwhelming power, and seems to mock all efforts made to withstand its progress. A most striking exemplification of

this appeared in the dreadful Cholera which swept over many of our cities some years ago. I was then in New York city--an eye-witness and more than an eye-witness of its terrific power. My own system experienced its withering shock. A man of the strongest constitution occupied a room adjacent to mine; was attacked the same hour that I was, and within a few hours was a corpse. Its powerful sweep was appalling. You might as well put forth your hand to stay the tornado in its rush of power as think to withstand this messenger of the Almighty. So with those forms of destruction which come at God's behest to whelm the hardened sinner in destruction. They come with the strides and the momentum of Omnipotence. The awful hand of God is in them, and who can stand before Him when once His wrath is moved?

Many other forms of disease, as well as the Cholera evince the terror of Jehovah's arm. The strong man is bowed low; his physician sits by his bed-side, powerless for help; disease mocks all efforts to withstand its progress; human skill can only sit by and chronicle its triumph. God is working, and none but a God could resist.

- 2. The very language shows that the principle idea of the writer is that this destruction is endless. It is destruction--the utter ruin of all good--the blighting and withering of all happiness forever. No rescue shall be possible; recovery is hopeless; it is a grave beyond which dawns no resurrection. The destruction wrecks all hope in the common ruin, and in its very terms precludes the idea of remedy. Can you conceive of another element of terror, not already involved and developed in this most dire of all forms of destruction?

#### REMARKS.

1. We see how to account for the sudden deaths of the wicked that occur often, and what we are to think of them. Some such deaths have occurred here which were exceedingly striking to me. Here we have seen young men, sons of pious parents, children of many prayers and many warnings; but they waxed hard under reproof; and their days were soon numbered. Away they go--and we see them no more. There was one young man who came here to study. He had been warned and prayed for. Perhaps the Lord saw that there was no hope in any farther effort. His sickness I can never forget; nor his horror as death drew on apace. Away he passed from the world of hope and mercy. I will not attempt to follow him, nor would presume to know his final doom; but one thing I know--his companions in sin received in his death a most solemn and awful warning.

2. The danger of wicked men is in proportion to the light they have. Men of great light are much the more likely to be cut off in early life. Of this we have seen some very striking instances in this place. Some young men have been raised here--were here when I came to the place, and then, in the tender years of childhood and youth they saw their companions converted, and were often affectionately warned themselves. But they seemed to resist every warning and come quick to maturity in moral insensibility. I need not give their names; you knew them once; where are they now? It is not for me to tell where they are; but I can tell where they are not. They are not grown up to bless the church and the world; they did not choose such a course and such an end to their life. They are not here among us; No! the places that knew them once shall know them no more forever. You may call for them in our College halls; in the sad-hearted families where once they might be found; they respond to no call--till the blast of the final trumpet. They knew their duty but too well, and but too soon they apparently settled the question that they would not do it.

That old man of almost four score of whom I spoke was not brought up in any Oberlin. His birth place was in the dark places of the earth--in Canada--where he learned neither to read nor to write. There are children here not ten years old who have forty times as much knowledge on all religious subjects as he. He has lived to become hoary in sin; these children, brought up here need expect no such thing. Tell me where you can find an old man who has been brought up on the midst of great light, who yet lives long and waxes more and more hard in sin and guilt. Usually such men as have great light in their youth will not live out half their days.

3. It is benevolent in God to make His providential judgments in cutting down hardened sinners a means of warning others. Often this is the most impressive warning God can give men. In some cases it is so terrible that sinners have not dared to attend the funeral of their smitten associates. They have seemed afraid to go near the awful scene--so manifest has it been that God's hand is there. In many instances within my personal knowledge the hand of God has cut down in a most horrible manner, men who were opposing revivals. I cannot now dwell upon these cases.

4. We may learn to expect the terrible destruction of those who under great light, are hardening themselves in sin. I have learned when I see persons passing through great trials to keep my eye on them and see if they reform. If they do not I expect to see them ere long cut down as hopeless cumberers of the ground. Being often reprov'd yet still hardening their neck, they speedily meet their doom according to the principle of God's government announced in our text.

5. Reproof administered either soon subdues, or rapidly ripens for destruction. This ripening process goes on rapidly in proportion to the pressure with which God follows them with frequent and solemn reproofs. When you see God following the sinner close with frequent reproofs, plying him with one dispensation after another, and all in vain, you may expect the lifted bolt to smite him next and speedily.

6. The nearer destruction is to men, the less as a general thing they fear or expect it. When you hear them cry, "Peace and safety, then sudden destruction" is at hand and they shall not escape. Just at the time when you are saying--"I never enjoyed better health"--just then when you are blessing yourself in the prospect of securing your favorite objects, then sudden destruction comes down like an Alpine avalanche, and there is neither time to escape nor strength to resist. How often do you hear it said--Alas! it was so unexpected, so sudden--who would have thought this blow was coming! Just when we least of all expect it, it fell with fatal power.

7. Sinners who live under great light are living very fast. Those who are rapidly acquiring knowledge of duty, standing in a focal center of blazing light, with every thing to arouse their attention--they, unless they yield to this light, must soon live out the short months of their probation. They must soon be converted, or soon pass the point of hope--the point within which it is morally possible that they shall be renewed. Men may under some circumstances live to the age of seventy and never get so much light as they can in a few days or weeks in some situations. Under one set of circumstances a sinner might get more light--commit more sin and become more hardened in a twelve month than he would under other circumstances in a life of four score years. Under the former circumstances he lives fast. A sabbath school child might in this point of view die an hundred years old. The accumulations

of a hundred years of sin and guilt and hardness might in his case be made in one short year. Where light is blazing as it has blazed here; where children have line upon line as they are wont to have here, how rapidly they live! How soon do they fill up the allotted years of probation for the reason that the great business of probation is driven through with prodigiously accelerated rapidity! O how suddenly will your destruction come, unless you speedily repent! Of all places on earth, this should be the last to be chosen to live in, unless you mean to repent. I would as soon go to the very door of hell and pitch my tent to dwell there, as to come here to live unless I purposed to serve God. Yet many parents bring or send their children here to be educated--in hope often that they will be converted too; and this is well; so would I; but by all means, ply them with truth and press them with appeals and entreaties, and give them no rest, till they embrace the great salvation. Let these parents see to it that their children are really converted. If they pass along without being converted, do you not expect they will soon break away and plunge into some of the dark mazes of error? Who does not know that this is the natural result of resisting great light? "Because they receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved, God shall send them strong delusion that they may believe a lie, and all be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." O how they go on with rapid strides down to the depths of hell! You scarce can say they're here, before they are gone. And the knell of their early graves proclaims, "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy."

## **The Death of Saints Precious**

Lecture VIII

June 6, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Psa. 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

The sentiment of the text is clearly expressed, leaving us in no doubt as to what it is. God looks upon the death of His saints as an event of peculiar interest.

In discussing this subject I shall

*I. State several reasons why the death of His saints is precious in His sight.*

*II. Show that the death of saints should be precious to us.*

*III. State some reasons why this is often not the case, and why we fail of viewing this event as God does.*

## **I. Several reasons why the death of His saints is precious in His sight.**

- 1. God deems the death of His saints precious because their happiness is very dear to Him. When they die, they enter at once into eternal rest. Death is to them the gate way to perfect blessedness. Of course, He who deeply rejoices in their happiness cannot fail to sympathize with them most intensely in this eventful period of their existence. If God takes the interest in the welfare of His saints that parents do in the welfare of their children, He cannot be otherwise than greatly interested in their death.
- 2. God deems their death precious because He can now receive them home from all their wanderings. Unless He had been at pains to subdue their temper and cleanse them from all their sins, they could not bear to dwell with Him, and of course He could not dwell with them. His labors therefore have been not only faithful and kind, but wise and indispensable. And who needs be told that it has cost Him much painstaking, and great watchfulness to prepare them so that He could receive them again to Himself? How diligent and often how long-protracted is the process of discipline by which He trains them to let loose their grasp on earthly and sensual, and selfish pleasures, and set their hearts supremely on the living God! If an earthly parent had a prodigal son, of wayward temper and estranged affections--one who should be in no condition to return home and enjoy its society; but the father, aware of the case, should with great care and pains and with much wisdom and love pursue a train of measures to restore him to the spirit of a son, and should at length succeed; then would not the day of his return home be one of special rejoicing? Ye who are parents can appreciate this; and I therefore ask you if that day which should restore to your embrace such a son--a son who had thus wandered, but had been also thus reclaimed, would not be most precious in your eyes? O, that day would be long remembered in your house! Deeply would its remembrance be enshrined in your hearts! Why should it not be at least equally so with God when His children come home at last to Himself?
- 3. In a very important sense, when God receives His children home, He receives the reward of all His labors in their behalf. We are apt to speak only of our reward, when we allude to the joys of saints in heaven; why should we not also think and speak of God's? Has not He deserved a reward for all His cares and sacrifices and labors? And is it not fit that He should receive it? Is it not reasonable that He should rejoice in His own reward, and furthermore, that we should also rejoice with Him?
- 4. If the parent, in the case I just now supposed, should prepare his son to return home by a wise and careful discipline, that son would naturally think much of his return and of the reward it would secure to himself. But be assured, that father and that mother would think of it not less than their son does. It is the day of their reward, not less than of his. O, how a parent's great love would gush forth! Hear him say--"Now I am rewarded--now I am more than repaid for all my tears and all my toils!" O, this is a gratification, such as none but a parent can appreciate. Those who love their children can understand this, and you need a parent's love in order to understand it as it is. Parents regard their children as a great treasure, and so does God regard His. He often calls them "His treasure," "His inheritance." In a thousand ways He shows how much He loves His children, and how He rejoices over them with joy unspeakable, as if they were His greatest treasure. We need not assume that His love of them is measured by their

intrinsic value; no, but rather by the depth of His own benevolent heart. He loves them the more because they are fit subjects for His compassion, and because His great compassion has been so drawn out in their behalf. Do not parents love most tenderly those poor unfortunate children who have most strongly enlisted their compassion; nay, sometimes those guilty children, who have most exercised their patience, wisdom and love in reclaiming them to filial virtue? So God rejoices over His children, brought home from all their wanderings, as one who rejoices over great spoil. Can we not appreciate in some measure how great this joy must be? Is it not said that there is joy over one reclaimed more than over the ninety and nine who went not astray?

- 5. God accounts their death precious, because He really enjoys their joy better than they do themselves. We are wont to think only of the joy of the departed saint; but suppose ye that God has no sympathy with such joy as theirs? When they come home, and He sees how happy they are, does not He enjoy their happiness with most intense satisfaction? You know how a parent in similar circumstances would weep for very joy in sympathy with dearly loved children; how much more shall God rejoice in the happiness of those whom He so greatly loves! And the holy angels too; did you never conceive how they receive the glorified saint--with what intense and hearty welcome--with what a gush of new and heavenly delight? Yea, all heaven is filled with new joy when another glorified saint is added to their number. The glorified saints already there, know how to sympathize most fully. We can in some measure conceive how unutterable their emotions will be.

Let it now be considered that the infinite Father casts His eye over this whole scene. With the most intense sympathy He looks down upon the joyous surprise of the newly-arrived saint--upon the joyous sympathy of every holy angel, and upon the thrill of rapturous welcome that vibrates through every glorified saint around the throne. Is it strange then that the death of His saints is most precious in His eyes?

- 6. Again, their death must be precious to God because He has so long sympathized with them in all their trials, pains, and sorrows. Whatever has touched them has touched the apple of His eye. Hence, when He sees their trials come to a perpetual end; that their last pang has ceased forever, their last sorrow died away to return no more at all, think you not that this event is most precious in His eyes? He has watched all their labors and sorrows with a parent's most tender interest; He has seen them mourning, broken down with grief and penitence; agonizing in their warfare against sin and temptation; when therefore, He shall see all these trials terminate, to be renewed no more--their physical pains and trials cease--all their wants supplied forever, and the state of want passed forever away; when He sees all this, think you not that He rejoices in it with great joy? No doubt He does. There can scarcely be a more erroneous view of God's character than that which denies to Him the attribute of sympathy and joy in the happiness of His creatures.
- 7. God has the more joy in their death because He never takes them away from earth without providing against the evil consequences which might otherwise result. He always takes care that their death shall not on the whole be any loss, but rather a gain to His church on earth. Hence His joy is not abated by any actual damage done on the whole by their being taken out of the world.



- 8. God is greatly glorified in their death. Who could witness such a death as that of our dear sister whose funeral we have this day attended, without giving glory to God for His blessed gospel--glory to God for His abounding grace? And not this case of death only; how many cases have we seen here in which the triumphs of grace have been illustrious? Their exit from earth did not seem to be death; no, it was rather the entrance of a freed, triumphant spirit into a glorious eternity! With what a spirit of calm and fearless triumph they leaned upon the arm of a present Jesus and passed away as in a cloud of glory from our sight! And do not such deaths greatly glorify God?
- 9. The death of the righteous is also greatly useful to the living. Often it is one of the most precious instrumentalities which God can employ. What does God ever do which more deeply impresses survivors than this? Let it not then be thought strange that God should deem such an event most precious.

## **II. The death of saints should be precious in our sights.**

- 1. Because it is so in the sight of God. A daughter whose father was dying, said to her mother--I opened my Bible to read, in my sorrow, and I fell upon this text--"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." I then thought--surely if my father's death is precious in God's sight, why should it not be in mine? Now this was simple and truthful. Why not? Does not God take the right views of things? Can we suppose that His views and feelings are not so correct as ours? Can we demand that He should come over to our views and conform Himself to our notions, and not we to His?

He deems the death of His saints precious; shall we deem it calamitous, grievous, and evil? Why shall we not assume that God sees all events and this one of death in particular, in a far more just light than we do, so that we ought to conform our views to His, and not seem to insist that He ought to conform His to ours? Is not His view more broad and deep and in every way more perfect than ours?

- 2. It is most obvious that we ought to sympathize with God, both in our opinions and in our feelings. If He regards the death of the righteous as being precious because it is joyous to them, glorious to Himself--because it places them beyond the reach of care and trouble, it is plain that every one of these considerations ought to have no less and no different influence on our minds.
- 3. Really the entrance of a soul into eternal glory is an event which ought to be regarded as precious in our sight. Before my conversion, and indeed for some little time afterwards, I had had no just conception of the right view to be taken of the death of a saint. But in process of time I had opportunity to witness a most triumphant death. Then I saw its nature and its bearings as I never had before. I could not mourn. Nay, so far was I from mourning over such a death, that I literally held my hands over my mouth to keep myself from shouting. The whole scene seemed to me like celebrating the triumph of a soul ushered into the glorious presence of Jehovah, and not like the gloom of bidding farewell to a friend bound to some unknown clime. You may well suppose that my emotions rose almost beyond control. Many of you perhaps know what it is to have your emotions rise and swell till they seem to be irrepressible. Mine were so when I first came to realize what the death of the righteous really is. Be assured, that

death was "precious" to me. It seemed like a precious feast to my soul. So much did I enjoy these views, that I said to my father--then recently converted--"If you were to die today, it seems to me I could not mourn, but should rather rejoice in view of the glory upon which your ransomed spirit would enter."

### **III. Let us inquire, why it is that we sometimes do not consider the death of saints as precious.**

To prevent any misunderstanding, let me say here that in a certain sense it cannot be regarded as unlawful to grieve over the loss of friends. Christ Himself wept over the grave of Lazarus; surely we too may give scope to our natural sensibilities which cannot but suffer when ties so dear are rent asunder. Christ knew that His disciples would grieve at His death; hence He sought to comfort them; but even this comfort did not assume that it was morally wrong for them to feel afflicted at parting with such a friend. Christians learn by their experience that the outward man may be deeply afflicted, while yet the inward man enjoys great consolation. The sensibilities bleed under the wound; but yet the joy of the Lord is such a strength to the soul that many of its tears are tears of submissive, trustful joy.

But let us now pass on to say,

- 1. That we often fail to regard the death of saints as precious, because of our own selfishness. The selfishness of surviving friends is so great that they do not look at the great glory and great gain of the departed saint. So much are they absorbed in their own loss, that they seem incapable of looking away to the glory of that dear child of God who has been permitted at last to go home. Of course this must be a very short-sighted view of things. How can we justify it to our minds that we should think only of our own interests, and not of the interests of our dear friends? Why should not their happiness be as dear to us as our own?
- 2. Sometimes, through unbelief, we do not really appreciate the fact that our deceased friends have gone to eternal glory. I mean that we do not take home this fact to our hearts as a reality. We do not sincerely doubt it; we are ready to prove it against any avowed skeptic; and yet how much we may need one to prove it to our hearts! Nothing is more common than for the mind to hold opinions which yet have not attained their due sway over the sensibilities and the heart. The evidence has commanded the assent of the intelligence, but the mind has not so embraced it, so incorporated it among acknowledged realities, and so learned to act upon it, that it exerts its legitimate influence as truth upon our entire being.

In accordance with this peculiar attitude of mind, mourning friends often act as if they did not believe what the Bible says of the blessedness and glory of the saints in heaven. They may talk of what the Bible teaches on this subject; may theorize upon it, but after all may fail to believe it so that it has the power of a reality upon their hearts. In fact they do not trust their friends with God--do not give their Savior credit for faithfulness in having carefully taken His own loved children to His own bosom in the upper mansions.

- 3. There is often much unbelief as to its being the wisest and best thing possible for our friends to be taken away just as they in fact are. This is one reason why we do not esteem the death of saints precious. I know it is generally admitted that God has done the best possible thing; but

though they may admit this in theory, they yet may not believe it in heart. It is no small matter in such cases to admit fully and believe heartily that infinite love sought the very best result; that infinite wisdom devised the best means to secure it; and that infinite power could not lack the resources to do the best thing in the best way. To take hold of these truths in their broad extent and precious application, soothes the turmoil of the afflicted soul, and makes the death of a saint seem truly precious. But many fail of this because they do not thoroughly confide in the wisdom and love of God.

- 4. Often there is much unbelief in regard to the provisions God has made to prevent evil to the church by the death of His servants. We lose sight of the fact that God has been careful to make provision, so that no harm shall accrue to His church. We seem to suppose that the church depends for wise guardianship chiefly upon ourselves, and hence we feel greatly distressed that God should remove important instrumentalities for her prosperity. O, if we only saw that the all-wise God is Zion's best friend, we might quell many of our sad disquietudes. Then no fear lest Zion should suffer, need abate our joy in the precious death of the saints.
- 5. Sometimes our darkness of mind in regard to the reasons God may have for His conduct, gives us trouble. We do not consider that we ought to have confidence in God's wisdom and love, without seeing His reasons, and that our faith in Him ought to take the place of perceived reasons. When our ignorance makes us tremble for the ark of God, let our faith counteract our ignorance, and say continually--"Is not my Father at the helm?" We ought to have sufficient confidence in God to believe that He has not removed a saint from earth one day too soon--has not done it without having made all needful provision to supply his place and press forward the labors in which he was engaged.
- 6. We are often in an unrealizing state of mind in regard to the real happiness of the saints in heaven. We may indeed know enough to constrain us to say--"All is well; I could not wish it were otherwise; I can not have any misgivings in this case about the wisdom or the love of God in this death." Yet we may be quite unable to rise to enter into God's views and feelings, so as to feel it precious to have His saints die. We are in a strait; we feel greatly perplexed and troubled;--I can scarcely express it;--we are benumbed and confounded. It was so with me at the death of my wife. Although I could say I would not have it otherwise, yet it was some days before I could get over the numbness which the dreadful shock of her death gave me. But ere long I came into a state in which I could rejoice in her blessedness. Indeed I think I never had a more perfect sympathy with her in all my life than I had then. It seemed to me that I could understand the state of mind of a saint gone home to Jesus. I could see its elements; and could appreciate in some good measure the amazing depth of their joys and of their peace.

When I stood by the sick-bed of this dear sister, now just gone from us, I remembered how she had often said, "I grow stronger and stronger." And I also recollect one occasion when she said in substance--"I can not conceive how I can think of earthly scenes even when I have reached heaven, and not feel anxiety about them." I told her, faith sufficed for all; she would trust God, and all would be peace. Such a smile came over her countenance as bespoke the presence, already, of the peace of heaven.

When I came to see her die, I could not but think of the blessed words of the

text--"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." There she lay, in her last conflict with pain and the ills of mortality. God was just about to receive her to Himself, and to wipe away all her tears forever. O how plain to me then that the death of the saints is most precious!

- 7. Often we do not allow ourselves to sympathize with God, and enter fully into His views and feelings. If we would only realize how God must regard such an event, we could see why it should be precious in His sight, and consequently why it should be so in ours.
- 8. Another reason is, we have loved our deceased friends for our own sake. I think this is very often the case. For a few days after my wife died, my sorrows seemed to increase upon me, until it seemed to me that I should go deranged. I had no refuge, and could get no relief only in flying to God as my helper. He seemed to say--Have you not loved your wife for your own sake, and with a selfish affection? If you have loved her only for My sake, you will be willing to let her come and dwell with Me. If you have loved her for the churches' sake, you have no occasion to mourn; I will take care of the church; its interests shall not suffer by the death of your wife.

This showed me my great folly and made me ashamed of my immoderate grief and my selfish regard to my own comfort and happiness. I said to myself--Shall I be thinking of my loss and not of her much greater gain? Besides, God has taken nothing from me that was really mine. My wife was not mine; she belonged to God and not to me; or if in a certain sense she belonged to me, yet she belonged in a far higher sense to God, and shall I grieve because God has taken away what was so properly His own? Can I mourn that she has gone to heaven?

But the loss experienced by the children: shall I not mourn for them? Yet what is their loss compared with her gain? And will not God take care of the children? Does not God care for these children more than I do? Yes, doubtless He does. These considerations did me immense good.

- 9. We sometimes fail to see that the death of saints is precious, because we are really unsubmitive. We do not bow to the will of God as revealed in His providences. Often persons are found complaining of what God does in His providences. In such a state of mind, no wonder persons do not see that the death of saints is precious.

Again, some have very low and imperfect views of what death is to a saint. They reverse the Bible order of things. Whereas God says, the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth, they reverse it, and make the day of one's death almost wholly grievous. They have very low conceptions of what heaven is, even though they may really believe in theory what the Bible reveals on this subject.

Again, many are prone to conceive of their Christian friends as gone to the grave, and scarcely think of them as being anywhere else save in the cold ground. Now so long as we take this view of their case, it can not appear precious. An event which should really commit our dear friends to the cold prison of a tomb, and to "corruption and worms," can

not be rationally regarded as joyous. But we ought to know better than to think of them as laid in the ground. They are not in the grave, it is only their wasted flesh, which they have done using--which is too poor to be used longer--that is laid in the ground. Why should we mourn the burial of their wasted and worn-out bodies? We might as well gather up their old clothes and bury them with many tears and lamentations because we shall see them no more. No; our dear friends are not in the grave. They have gone to be with Jesus; "absent from the body, but present with the Lord." We are ourselves much more properly in the grave than they.

## REMARKS.

1. It is very useful for us to follow the departed saint to the world above. I am sensible that I have greatly failed in this respect. Since my frequent loss of dear friends has drawn me to think of this, it has been greatly blessed to me. Since I came here to reside, you know I have buried my father, my mother, and a sister; a little daughter; my son-in-law--and my dear wife. These repeated deaths have made me familiar with the thoughts of heaven, and with all that appertains to death as the passage thither. My experience has thoroughly taught me the value of such influences, drawing the mind away from earth and constraining it to hold communion with the eternal world. This deep communion with heaven and heavenly things disrobes death of all terror, and makes it look in every aspect of it, glorious. It has been so in my own case. During my sickness more than a year ago, when for some days I was brought to look upon death as probably near at hand, I found that death in all its aspects was not only not dreadful, but was even altogether desirable. If I thought of leaving my friends, I knew God would take care of them. The pangs of dying were no longer terrible. The thought of being dead was wholly pleasant. There was nothing to fear; everything to desire. Not one aspect of death, or anything connected with it gave me a single pang. How it will be with me when I shall come to die, I can not say; but in that sickness, I was able to appreciate how it might seem to look right into the scenes of dying and entering the eternal world. Then I could close my eyes and seem to lose myself--fully aware that not improbably my next consciousness might be in the eternal state.

2. It is very profitable for us to refuse to pity ourselves and dwell on our own loss. From the time I have alluded to, when the Lord showed me how I ought to rejoice in the perfect blessedness of my departed wife, I refused to pity myself. I said--"Let me rather rejoice that God has saved one whom I so much loved, and has removed her at once and forever away from all pain and sorrow." Shall I not rejoice that she has gone and taken possession of heaven itself? Why not? Could I wish for her greater blessedness than this?

3. If our faith in the gospel be consistent and intelligent, it will lead us to look upon such events as this without murmuring, and without ever counting such events as on the whole sad and painful. Yet let me say, this state of profoundest resignation and this regarding the death of the saints as truly precious, is not inconsistent with human tears and human sighs. Even in repentance there is joy. So when saints die, though we mourn, yet in the depths of our souls we may have the joy of heaven. We may sympathize strongly with our earthly relatives and friends, and yet have the joy of heaven in our souls. Jesus Himself knew how to sympathize with afflicted, bereaved friends, and we may well thank Him for giving us this precious fact on scripture record, for our consolation down through all time. O how many hearts have been comforted by the sweet record of those sympathizing tears at the grave of Lazarus! Our sympathies may be far less deep and pure than His; yet it is good even for us to learn

how to sympathize with afflicted friends. I have found it to be so. Within a few years I have lost friends in every form of relationship; parent, child, sister and wife; and now I find it a luxury to mingle my tears with those who are in any similar affliction. It seems to renew the bonds that bind us together as social beings, and to renew them, moreover, under circumstances well-adapted to make them more tender and hallowed than ever before.

Finally, if the death of saints is precious to God, let it be also to us. If God is pleased and happy in this event, shall we not sympathize with Him? What better thing could God have done for them than He has done? And now shall we not sympathize with Him, and rejoice also with Him, and bless His name for His great mercies to our friends? Surely not to do so is nearly equivalent to refusing to thank God for heaven! Shall we be so ungrateful as to overlook the great gift of a blessed immortality? Shall we act as if God ought to let us live here forever; or ought to keep our friends here as long as we ourselves live; or ought to have provided some better mode of transit from earth to heaven than death? Let us beware how we take exceptions, even impliedly, to God's dealings!

## **God Not Pleased with the Death of the Wicked**

Lecture IX  
June 20, 1849

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Text.--Eze. 33:11: "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

In discussing these words it will be important to consider,

- I. What the death spoken of is not.*
- II. What it is.*
- III. Why God has no pleasure in it.*
- IV. Why He does not prevent it.*
- V. The only possible way to escape it.*

### **I. What the death spoken of is not.**

- 1. Manifestly this death cannot be merely the death of the body; for all will die this death, whether they turn to God or not; and whether they live a spiritual life or not. The righteous are as really and as much exposed to natural death as the wicked. But the death spoken of in the text is one which may be escaped by turning from one's wicked ways to obedience.
- 2. The death spoken of cannot be spiritual, or a state of sinfulness; for God represents them as being already in this state. They are now in sinful ways from which He entreats them to turn. But the death spoken of is prospective. God does not ask, Why are ye dead? but Why will ye die?

## **II. What it is.**

Positively, the death spoken of must be the opposite of the life here referred to. This life cannot be natural life, for all, both saint and sinner, are conceived of as being alike in natural life. Of course, the life must be salvation -- eternal life -- that blessedness which saints enjoy in the favor and love of God, begun here, prolonged forever hereafter. Now, if such be the life alluded to, the death, being in contrast with it, must be eternal death; the misery experienced by all God's enemies. As the life referred to here is not a mere state of existence, but a state of positive blessedness, so the death placed over against it, cannot be annihilation -- the natural opposite of mere existence -- but must be misery -- the natural opposite of blessedness.

These remarks must suffice on this point, it being one on which no rational doubt can exist.

## **III. Why has God no pleasure in the sinner's death?**

A few days since you may recollect I preached a funeral sermon, to show that the death of saints is precious in God's sight. Their death is to Him an event of deep interest. But the sinner's death is not so. Here is death in which God has no pleasure. He gives us His own solemn word, nay more, His oath, that He takes no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked. We are now to consider why.

- 1. The death of saints in which God takes a special interest is only the death of the body; but the death of the wicked is the death of both soul and body together. Both together are involved in misery and ruin. By this I do not mean that either is annihilated. The body we know is not annihilated at death; its constituent elements only change their chemical relations; but do not by any means cease to exist. There is no more reason to suppose the soul experiences annihilation, than that the body does. Indeed there is no reason whatever for supposing that annihilation ever can be the lot of either soul or body. I was amazed to hear some of the Adventists maintain that the threatened death of the wicked is nothing but annihilation, for nothing could be more obvious than that this position of theirs utterly lacked all foundation either in scripture or reason.
- 2. God has no pleasure in the sinner's death because He is a moral being, and it is contrary to the nature of moral beings to delight in suffering for its own sake. To all moral beings happiness is intrinsically good, and unhappiness is intrinsically evil, and must be from the very constitution of moral beings. Hence unhappiness can never be a source of pleasure, in itself considered. The view of it as endured by others cannot be deemed a good by any moral being,

for its own sake, and considered simply as misery, for the reason that it is what it is -- misery, and not happiness -- the very constitution of a moral being demanding that happiness shall be held as the only good, and misery as intrinsically evil. Even Satan with all his malignity against God can never enjoy the sight any more than the endurance of misery, for its own sake. How much more must this be true of God! Selfishness may wickedly trample down the rights and happiness of others; but yet good to itself, and not misery to others, is its direct object. The consequent misery to others will in its time re-act upon selfish beings with terrible vengeance, harrowing up their souls with the bitterest torture. It is in the very nature of selfishness and sin to accumulate the resources for its own torment, just as benevolence accumulates the means of its own blessedness; and the reason in both cases lies fixed in the changeless nature of moral beings. The selfish cannot enjoy evil-doing let them try ever so much, for it is not in their nature as moral beings to enjoy misery. If it were, they might make a heaven of hell itself. But as it is, their selfish attempts to wrest away others' good will cause misery first to others, and next, ultimately and eternally, to themselves. Sin must be its own tormentor. Neither the sight nor the infliction of misery can ever in itself beget happiness. The nature of all moral beings forbids it.

- 3. God cannot have pleasure in the sinner's death because His character forbids it. God is not only by nature a moral agent, but He is in character a good moral agent -- a being of infinite benevolence. Hence He cannot delight in misery anywhere, for its own sake, and in view of its own nature. The sight of misery endured is always distressing to a benevolent being, in itself considered. He can acquiesce in it and tolerate its infliction only when circumstances make it necessary as a means for a greater good. In such a case, He might truly say, I have no pleasure in their suffering.

So with God in regard to the sinner's death. Since He is purely and perfectly benevolent, it is contrary to His character that He should find pleasure in the misery of His creatures. Love desires evermore the happiness of all beings, and is from its very nature disposed to secure the highest possible degree of it. God pities the self-ruined sinner; never rejoices in his dreadful doom, for its own sake.

- 4. It must be that God regards the death of the sinner viewed in itself as a great evil. In its own nature it is an evil of the very greatest magnitude. No finite mind can begin to conceive how great and dreadful this evil is. It needs the sweep of an infinite mind to measure its length and breadth, its depth and its height. None other than the mind of a God can grasp its limitless dimensions, or measure its boundless magnitude. To His mind therefore, the death of the sinner must appear an immensely great evil.
- 5. God can have no pleasure in the death of sinners because it is a state in which He can wisely show them no more favor. Their relations to His government become such that He is constrained to debar them from all mercy and from all good. Unmingled retribution must now take its course. Mercy has had its day; simple justice must henceforth have unimpeded exercise. So long as the wicked were in this world of probation, God took pleasure in showing them all the favors He wisely could, for it is always in His heart to bless the guiltiest as far as He consistently can; and He seeks to constrain the sinner by His mercies to turn from his sins. But when the sinner has murdered all his probation-time and used up all his mercies upon his lusts, he passes away to another state unknown to Mercy. There he can have not one drop of water to



cool his tongue. There his prayers to Father Abraham will be utterly unavailing. On all these points, the account given us by Jesus Christ Himself of the rich man and Lazarus is most full and explicit. Whatever else this account teaches or does not teach, one thing is made plain by it; namely, that God finds it necessary to refuse the least favor to sinners in hell. "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things" -- thou hast had them all, and there are no more to be given. Not so much as one drop of water is left for the lost sinner in hell. He begs for this smallest favor, but begs in vain. How dreadful this fact! The lost sinner is in such relations to God that God is compelled to restrain Himself from giving him one drop of water. Even infinite benevolence cannot give so small a favor as this.

Now it is plain that a God of love can have no pleasure in being brought into such a position as this. He took the greatest pleasure in bestowing good upon even the sinner, so long as He wisely could. It was His happiness to send His rain on the just and on the unjust; but when the dreaded hour at last came, and God as the great Executive Magistrate of the universe was compelled to cut down the guilty sinner and show His own eternal abhorrence of sin, then He could no longer show the sinner the least mercy. This removing the sinner beyond the range of mercy is a thing in which, considered by itself, God can have no pleasure. The same is true of all benevolent beings.

It is remarkable to see how earnestly God repels the slander upon Him of taking pleasure in the sinner's death. The Jews in Ezekiel's time went so far as to use the proverb -- "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The Most High solemnly rebukes His people for this slander; protests His own innocence of the implied charge, and finally closes with the explicit averment -- "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." (Ezek. 18:2, 32) So also in our text, He takes His solemn oath, and since He could swear by no greater, He swears by Himself. "As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Therefore let no sinner seek to throw the blame of his own ruin off from himself and upon his Maker. No slander could be more groundless and more foul.

- 6. Another reason still is that when sinners have outlived their probation and are cut off in their sins, their depravity will be thenceforth unrestrained. How shocking it must be to the pure and holy God to see His creatures giving themselves up to utter and unrestrained depravity -- to see them giving boundless scope to the most odious and horrible rebellion. The book of Revelation speaks of the wicked, under God's punitive judgments, as "gnawing their tongues for pain, and blaspheming the God of heaven because of their pains and of their sores, and yet repenting not of their deeds." Their condition amid the dread realities of hell will not reform them; nay, so far from this, it will only drive them to desperation, and in the utter desperateness of their depraved hearts, they will break out in most horrid blasphemies. O how will sinners damn themselves to a deeper and still deeper damnation! What an unutterable state of depravity will hell be when sin takes its ample, unimpeded course, and has a whole eternity in which to range and ripen, and develop its horrid spirit and terrible tendencies! No wonder that God can take no pleasure in such a world as that.

In that world the sufferings of the wicked will be unmitigated. Here, although their depravity is great, nay, even total, yet so many restraints are upon them that many of

them appear quite respectably among their fellow beings. They are induced to conform outwardly to the rules of good society. Consequently in this world they enjoy many comforts, and ordinarily they have an ample supply for their physical wants. The common pleasures of society, of earthly friendships and relationships, fall to their lot. Consequently they are by no means so miserable as they might be. Indeed they are often wont to think themselves quite happy. And they do doubtless have a sort of feverish enjoyment, poor enough at best, as the portion of the human soul, yet vastly unlike that dreadful state in which every source of enjoyment shall be utterly cut off. There shall be gnawing desire but no gratification; pressing want, but no supply, no employment but groans and sighs and such developments of their depravity as bring their own torturing punishment with them. If the Bible had said nothing about their case we might yet know that they must be purely and utterly miserable; for what source of happiness can remain to them in all the realms of nature, or in all the universe of God? Here they manage to get some good because God is sparing them to give them space to repent, and is trying them if so be He may subdue their hearts by His love; but when they have abused all this good till God can bestow it no longer, what shall remain then? When death shall have smitten their last pleasure, where are they!

**IV. But it is time that we should ask, Why does not God prevent the death of the wicked? If He takes no pleasure in it, why should He suffer it to be?**

- 1. You are aware that men have often inferred from God's benevolence that He will not suffer the wicked to be lost. But who has any right to infer this? How does it appear that benevolence cannot inflict a lesser evil for the sake of preventing a greater? Who can prove it unwise for God to create beings and suffer them to continue their existence, although they may sin -- yes, may sin, despite of any power which God can wisely use to prevent it? That is -- for the question resolves itself into this -- who can prove that on the whole more evil than good must result from the existence of a sinning race of moral agents? Who can show that it may not be indefinitely better to have such a race with all the attendant results than not to have created them, or having created them, to establish a government so different from the present as would have prevented it?

But if a God of infinite wisdom and love might give existence to a race who could and should sin, then surely it is no marvel that He should punish them. Indeed the only marvel is that He should ever do otherwise than punish -- should ever pardon. Pardon, not punishment, is the strange thing. Revelation apart, who could ever infer rationally that God would pardon one sinner? From what data could man infer it? The wisest sinners that ever have lived have made the inference that God could save none. They have seen that God is a Moral Governor, and hence cannot be pleased with sinners. Hence they inferred, and most reasonably too, that He can save none. How could they have made any other rational inference without the aid of revelation?

- 2. God does not prevent the death of the wicked for the good reason that He cannot wisely do it. Some are shocked at this remark; but why should they be; for what God Himself says on this subject most surely implies that He cannot wisely prevent the sinner's death. He solemnly avers that He has no pleasure in it, and plainly implies that it is in itself an unpleasant and undesirable

thing. If so, then He would prevent it if He wisely could. He says to sinners -- "Turn ye, for why will ye die?" implying that He is grieved that they should die, and also that their own turning is the only means of preventing so dreadful a doom. No language could imply more plainly that He cannot and will not do Himself what He commands and exhorts them to do.

To the same purport He says again -- "What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" Does not this forcibly imply that God could not do more to secure holiness and save from hell than He actually had done? Now it should be well considered that what God could not do wisely to save sinners, He could not do at all without sinning. There is no middle course between acting wisely and sinning. For God to act otherwise than with wisdom must be wrong.

- 3. God could not have prevented their destruction by refusing to create them. Many ask, Why did God create men if He knew they would sin? The answer is, He could not forbear to create without Himself sinning. He saw it would be wise to create moral agents, who would sin, and some of whom would be lost; and how could He act other than wisely without forever condemning Himself for wrong-doing? If God has ever in any instance acted unwisely, it has not been in His case as sometimes in ours -- through ignorance. No; there never can be in His case this vindication for acting unwisely. If God in any case does more or less than infinite wisdom dictates, He cannot but know it, and cannot but regard it as sin.

Now therefore if wisdom dictated the creation of the beings who would become wicked, God could not forbear to create, without personal sin, nay, could not forbear without absolute self-ruin! Do we think it a small matter that God should sin? Then we have not yet begun to take right views of the subject. For God to sin would be to lose His own self-respect -- destroy His own peace and blessedness -- unfit Himself either to enjoy His own character and works, or to govern His universe.

- 4. God could not wisely have done more than He has done for the sinner's salvation. He has all along done all that Infinite Wisdom has demanded. To have done more or other at any moment would have been sin. And who does not see that it must be a far less evil for God to suffer moral agents to sin than to take Himself any course which is sinful? If either God or His creatures must be ruined by sin, let it be the sinner and not God. It is infinitely better that God should suffer the sinner to ruin himself than suffer Himself to be ruined. By so much the more is this true because the ruin of God by His own sinning would inevitably involve the ruin of the whole universe, a calamity the magnitude of which defies all our comprehension.

We should never lose sight of the great truth that God always acts considerately and wisely. If He creates moral agents who become sinners, He does it wisely, following evermore the dictates of His intelligence and of His benevolence. It is plain that God could not wisely abridge the liberty of moral agents, nor indeed could He save them even if He should, for the very idea of the salvation of a moral agent implies his own voluntary turning from sin. None but moral beings can have salvation from sin and from hell; the existence of moral beings involves a moral government over them, and over them as moral beings, which is the same thing as to say, that they must have the liberty of free voluntary action. If therefore God would have a moral government, He must let it have

scope, and meet the results be they what they may. I do not mean that He must preclude Himself from throwing in moral influences to affect their action; but I do mean that their liberty of moral action must not be abridged. His interposing influences must evermore be of a moral and not of a physical or compulsory nature.

I have said that God acts wisely, and cannot act otherwise. I mean this in its fullest extent. It is always true. At every hour and moment of each sinner's existence God could truly say -- What could I have done more for thee that I have not done? The sinner may misapprehend the case, and may suppose that God might do, or might have done more; but God makes no mistakes; God never misapprehends the real facts of the case.

- 5. God cannot save men without their concurrence; in the nature of the case they could not be holy without their own concurrence; how then could they be happy without it? Being constituted moral agents, and made subjects of moral government, it must be in every point of view impossible to save them unless they will turn from their sins. God's government must remain moral, and hence He can do nothing inconsistent with its moral nature. If then God works upon the sinner by means of His providence and His Spirit, to the utmost extent He wisely can, and all in vain, there remains nothing more which as a Moral Governor He can do to save him.
- 6. Another reason why God does not prevent the death of the wicked is that He regards it as a less evil than to interpose in any way possible to Himself, to save them. If they would turn under such influences as He can wisely use, He would rejoice; but He is already going to the utmost limit of His discretion, and how can He go farther? Sooner than go farther, He would let ten thousand worlds go to ruin. Who can find fault with Him for this? Who can blame the all-wise God for following the dictates of His own wisdom? If He should in any single particular deviate from His own sense of propriety and from His own judgment of what is best for the universe, how dreadful the consequences! Perhaps we are not wont to consider that there are bounds beyond which God cannot go, and beyond which He never does go. These bounds are always ascertained by Infinite Wisdom. They have their foundation in the nature of moral agents, and in the exigencies of God's vast government. Who but God Himself can decide how long He can safely bear with a lingering, self-hardening sinner -- and how far He can wisely go in the strivings of His Spirit, and in the favoring arrangements of His providences?

This view of the case is not only in accordance with the Bible, but it is inferred irresistibly from the known attributes of God. Some of you may ask -- How does it appear that God does as much as He can do for the good of each sinner? I answer -- we all know that God is a good and not a wicked being. He is moreover a moral agent, possessing attributes of mind and of heart, of which our own are a copy, for we are made in the image of God. Of course when we speak of God as a good being, we may, nay, we must reason by analogy drawn from other good beings. If we are good men, we shall of course seek to prevent all possible evil and produce all possible good. This is necessarily implied in our being good men.

Now what is implied in God's being good? That He consecrates Himself to the good of being. Goodness in God implies that He is all awake to prevent all the mischief He wisely

can, and secure all the good He wisely can. He knows intuitively that if He is a moral agent as we are; if He has a conscience as we have; if He has moreover a good heart, He will evermore do all He wisely can both to prevent evil and produce good.

- 7. Yet another reason is that although the evil of the sinner's death is great, yet He can make a good use of it. He can overrule it for important good to others and to various interests in His kingdom. The sufferings of the wicked may be in themselves a very great evil; yet God can bring those sufferings into such relations to His government, and can make them so useful in their influence on other beings, that the good results become in His mind a sort of compensation for the evil, so that on the whole He may see it wise to admit sin with all its results, rather than exclude it by any means possible to Himself.

**V. We may now see that the only possible way in which the sinner's death can be avoided, is for the sinner himself to turn from his evil way and live.**

The sinner need not look for God to change the policy of His government. He need not expect God to pardon sin without the sinner's repentance and the sinner's faith in Christ. He need not wait for some other name than that of Jesus given among men, whereby they may be saved, or for any other mode in which the sinner may avail himself of that name. God's government being what it is, repentance and faith in Jesus Christ are natural and necessary means of the sinner's salvation. He might as well ask Jehovah to come down from His throne, as ask Him to do anything more or anything different from what He is doing to save sinners. The sinner, therefore, who would be saved, must meet Jehovah's own revealed conditions.

**REMARKS.**

1. The goodness of God is really no encouragement to those who continue in sin. Hear the rebuke given by the Psalmist -- "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief. O mighty man! The goodness of God endureth continually." Why should you be proud of mischief? Know thou that God is good; and a good God is terrible to the wicked.

I am often amazed to hear persons talk as if the goodness of God afforded some security to those who live in sin. Some of you may be resting on this assumption. But how is this? If the goodness of God has hitherto prevented His using such means as have actually saved you from sin, how can you know but it may likewise prevent His saving you from hell? God has been good all along; but you are yet in sin. If His goodness has not stopped your sinning, how can you hope it will prevent your suffering? If His goodness has not availed to secure your conversion under the most favorable circumstances which even infinite love could arrange, how can you hope it will save you without your being converted? How can you venture on the assumption that God will recede from His ground, and since you will not come to His terms, He will come to yours? Suppose you that goodness and wisdom will ever do this?

It may be that you have not duly estimated the fact that God is immutable -- always good, and always having the same sort of goodness. If then His goodness has not prevented your sinning, and your suffering too, in this world; if all the efforts which goodness has been continually putting forth have hitherto failed, how can you infer that the same goodness may not fail hereafter? Especially when He assures you that now is the accepted time, and now His day of salvation? If His goodness cannot

arrest you in your course of sin, in the most favoring hour, how can you hope it will arrest you from going straight down to hell? What can you find either in the Bible or out of the Bible to warrant such an inference as that of your salvation from the goodness of God?

One thing you may certainly know to be fact. God has been always as good as He is now, or as He ever will be. Yet He has created this world; it has fallen into sin; He has visited it with many and sore judgments and much suffering for its sins; has declared that He will send every sinner to hell who will not turn from his evil ways, and has done all He wisely could to make you believe it. And now, can you rationally infer from God's goodness, that you as a sinner have no hell to fear? Ah, no, sinner no. You are moving on fast through the only period of your existence in which salvation is possible; you cannot arrest your progress towards the grave; you can never change the course of God's government towards sinners. God is too good to suffer any sinner to triumph over justice, or to subvert His own throne.

2. The goodness of God is not the security of the impenitent sinner's salvation, but the guarantee of his damnation. Sinners know this. They are not afraid of God because they think Him wicked, but because they think Him good, and dread the consequences of His goodness. What sinner ever feared injustice from God? Not one. Their fear is that God will deal with them as they deserve. Not without reason is it that they fear His goodness and His justice. These are the very qualities in His character which they have to fear; just as they fear good men and the best men most, not because they are bad men, but because they are good men.

3. The death of the wicked is not inconsistent with God's happiness. I have heard persons say that they never could be happy even in heaven, if they knew that any of their own friends or relatives were in hell; and they seem to wonder how God can be happy while He knows that sinners are in hell. The reason why God will not be unhappy is that He will have the eternal consciousness of having Himself done right, and of not being in any sense or degree to blame for the death of the wicked. When the smoke of their torments shall go up forever and ever, His consciousness will forever affirm -- no blood of theirs is on My raiment. With this consciousness God need not be unhappy in the sinner's eternal death.

4. God will have the eternal consciousness of having laid Himself out to the utmost to save sinners. He knows that He has gone to the very verge of propriety, just as far as He wisely could, at every successive step in their course through a life of sin to their eternal death. What a satisfaction that must be to such a mind as His to be able to say -- "What could I have done more to My vineyard that I have not done" in it? It is no fault of Mine that when I looked for it to bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes, fit only for burning.

In this view of the case it is easy to see that God will be content with having done the best thing He could do. Conscious of this, He will be satisfied, and will have no occasion to wish that He had been more than infinite, or to regret in any respect that He has not done more or better than He has.

He will be well satisfied on the whole with all the results of all He has done. He will indeed see that the misery of the wicked is, as viewed in itself, a great and almost an infinite evil; but when all the results are considered, He will be satisfied. For, it should be considered, God had foreseen all these

results. They do not break upon Him by surprise. He did not commence a plan with which He should be in its development, dissatisfied. He foresaw all the evils incidental to His plan -- all the sin and all the suffering consequent upon sinning. In full view of all, He asked Himself -- Shall I be satisfied with these results? He did not go forward without making up His mind that this course was, on the whole, altogether wise and good. Hence the evils which are to be developed in the sinner's death are not new to Him. They do not break forth suddenly upon Him so as to embarrass His movements and turn Him aside from His course. By no means. Right onward move His eternal counsels, as certain as His own existence. What infinite wisdom has devised, infinite power will execute. God never can lack the necessary firmness to do the very best thing in the best way.

These results, therefore, do not interfere at all with the happiness of God. The death of the sinner may be in itself a very great evil, and yet God sees that on the whole -- taking all results into view, He has the best of reasons to be satisfied with His own plan, and with all that He has Himself done in its execution. He will be satisfied with the results as a whole, although there may be things connected with it which are in themselves to be regretted.

Again, the death of the wicked will not be inconsistent with the happiness of heaven. Persons have often said, that they could not be happy in heaven, if they knew the wicked were in hell. Some of you may have thought so; but why? Are you a great deal better than God? Are you more benevolent or more wise than God is? Suppose you stand on the shore and you see a ship in the offing beating hard against a dreadful storm, and laden with precious human lives. You see their signals of distress; ah, you can even hear their shrieks and cries for help, and in your inmost soul you feel that you would save them all if you could. No doubt you would. God has the power to do it, but yet He lets the noble ship strike the breakers! You would have saved them; but are you therefore better than God? No; the reason why your course differs from God's course in the matter is, that you are not so good and not so wise as He. If you were as benevolent as He, you would act as He does.

But with your short vision of results, it would fill you with great anguish to see a ship's crew and passengers all dash upon the dreadful rocks and go to the bottom. Yet God can look calmly on, and trace the whole course of the dreadful calamity, satisfied that all shall be well in the end.

When saints reach heaven they will have more confidence in God than many people have now. They will see more than they do now, and will have indefinitely more confidence in the wisdom of what they cannot see. It will then appear plain to them that they have the same reason for being happy in all the results of moral government that God has. They will begin to see these results as they have never done before. With enlarged views they will see most clearly that God has done right, perfectly and infinitely right. O how their minds will be eternally solemnized by a view of hell! What a spectacle! What could make more solemn impressions of the fearfulness of sin, and of the firmness that prevails forever in the counsels of Jehovah! I have sometimes been greatly edified by seeing how Christians have borne the loss of friends dying in their sins. For a long time I could not understand this, and was greatly stumbled to conceive how Christians could be reconciled to such a trial. Is it stupidity, said I to myself, or is it unbelief? Subsequent reflection however, and observation, showed that it was neither. I saw how they might be happy in God, confiding in His wisdom and love. I no more suppose that heaven would be unhappy because of their vision of hell, than I suppose a virtuous community would be in seeing a man punished who was bent upon their ruin. Suppose there were in this community a

man full of all mischief, a child of the devil, reckless of law and right, periling and even taking life, whenever excited passion maddened him to the deed; suppose this man seized, convicted, and shut up in the state's prison, or even suppose him to be hung: you see it and you say -- this is in itself a great evil, but in view of all the results, you would say, Amen. Better that the guilty wretch should suffer as he deserves, than that society should be broken up -- other lives be destroyed, and an evil vastly greater than one man's death be done.

Now if in this world you may be brought to acquiesce in condign punishment brought upon the guilty, how much more so in the future world! There we shall see that their case is hopeless -- that nothing more could be done wisely to save them -- that they forced their way down to hell in full view of Calvary, despite of the tenderest entreaties and the most affecting invitations; then we shall see that nothing remained but for God to shut them up in the state's prison of the universe!

Persons sometimes say-- O if my relatives, my husband or my children must go to hell, I never can be reconciled with God's doings, never, NEVER! I never can be happy in heaven myself and see them in hell! What! Do you say to God -- You may send anybody else's children to hell if you please, but spare mine! All this will have passed away if you ever reach heaven. There God's friends are my friends, and God's enemies are my enemies. I have only one question to ask there: Is he a friend of God, or is he an enemy? All these distinctions about self and self's friends, or self's children, will then have vanished forever away. Does that pious mother think now that she could not be happy to see her own son sent to hell? Once in heaven, or even once fitted for heaven, your soul will rest calmly in God, sinking down sweetly into His will, and rejoicing that He never does and never can do otherwise than right.

But we must revert to the exhortation in our text. God says to each sinner, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Many sinners in this house have continued long in sin, expecting God to do something more than He has yet done, and indeed enough to save them; but will He? Do you know that He will? How do you know that He will? All this time while you have been waiting for Him, He has been waiting for you. He has come to you by all His servants, rising up early and sending them, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" This you will observe assumes that you are bent on your own death, and that you act as if you thought yourselves to have good reasons for choosing death. Your God asks to know what those reasons are. He tells you most solemnly that you need not die because He wants to have you, or because He has any pleasure at all in your death; nor because any one else -- unless it be Satan -- wants to have you die. No; if you have reasons they must be your own, and God asks you what they are. Now go home and ask yourself what they are. Press home to your own heart this question -- put to you by your Maker -- Why will ye die? Take your pen and write the reasons down, for you may have occasion enough to review them in the coming years and ages of your existence. Then write them down. I should like to know what they are, and it might be of use to yourself to study them more attentively than you have been wont to do. You will do well to write them all out fully, so that your own mind can measure them and weigh them and estimate soberly their real value. Won't you do this; do it seriously, in the stillness and solitude of your own chamber; write them all down; get upon your knees and spread them out before God. Say, Lord, Thou hast put this question to me -- Why wilt thou die?" Here is the answer. Lord, it is because Thou hast no mercy on sinners. It is because Thou hast done nothing to save me. Because I can't help going on in my sins. Because I can't repent and can't believe. \* \* \* But stop, sinner, read this over again before



God. Is there a word of truth in all you have written? Will it stand the test of even your own conscience? Will it bear to come before your Maker? Can it be of any use to you to "deny the Lord that bought you," and "make God a liar" to His very face -- in contempt of His own solemn oath?

## **The Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of True Christianity**

Lecture X

July 4, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Heb. 12:2: "Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame."

These words are spoken of Jesus Christ. They stand in the following connection. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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."

To develop fully the sentiment of our text, I will consider

- I. What this joy set before Christ was not.*
- II. What it was.*
- III. What is implied in the state of mind here described.*
- IV. Show that nothing short of this is real Christianity.*

### **I. This joy is not the joy of His own personal salvation.**

- 1. Christ did not undertake this great work for the sake of saving His own soul, and hence the joy in prospect was not the joy of being Himself saved from ruin. It is most manifest from the whole Bible that the object which Christ had in view was not His own good.
- 2. Neither was it His own glory. He everywhere insists that He does not seek His own glory, and that in this respect His course was directly contrasted with that of the Jews "who sought honor of one another."

## **II. What then was the joy set before Him?**

I answer, it was the great good to be secured, and the satisfaction to be found in securing it. He saw a world to be redeemed, out of whom a great multitude which no man can number could be actually saved. He saw the blessedness that would accrue to them eternally from this salvation. He saw the augmented joy of the heavenly hosts in their rescue and in their eternal joy; and He saw how His Father rejoiced in reclaiming the lost; these joys set before Him were enough to make His cross sweet and the shame of it a mere trifle.

## **III. What is implied in this state of mind.**

- 1. Consecration to the good of being, a real devotion of one's self to this object.
- 2. A single eye to this end. Persons are never satisfied and filled with joy in view of an object unless their hearts are fully set upon it, and set upon it evermore in proportion to the value of that object. Our joy in any object will depend very much upon the singleness of eye with which the end is sought.
- 3. The end must be chosen for its own sake. This must be a condition of our receiving joy in any object; that we choose it for what it is in itself. It must be a good object; an object the attainment of which is naturally adapted to give us joy. Then let it be sought earnestly and sincerely, and its pursuit will not disappoint us. The Bible represents Christ as having set His heart on this great end of securing the good of others.

## **IV. Nothing short of this state of mind, possessed and manifested by Jesus Christ, is real Christianity.**

- 1. Nothing else than this is the spirit of Jesus Christ; and we have the highest authority for saying that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," and can not have any real religion. If we would understand what Christianity is, we must understand what Christ is. It is plain that we can never understand Christianity only as we understand Jesus Christ. He is the great and perfect embodiment of real Christianity. Hence to know Christianity we must know Christ--must know His ends and His means for attaining those ends. Now it is certain, as we have seen, that His end was the highest good of being. Hence nothing else than this can be Christianity.

Again, nothing short of this is intrinsically right. Nothing short and nothing else can satisfy the demands of the intelligence. We know it to be essentially and necessarily right that all beings--even the Deity Himself, should devote themselves to this end. We know that we, and that all our race ought to consecrate ourselves to this end sincerely and supremely. Hence nothing less, and nothing else than this can be real Christianity.

- 2. Nothing short of this can prepare us for heaven. How could we receive joy in the employments of heaven unless we are prepared for it by sympathy with their great ends and objects? Who does not know that there must be interest felt in an end before its attainment can give us joy? How then could even heaven be agreeable to us only as our hearts are set upon

those objects, the attainment of which makes heaven blissful to its inhabitants?

The Spirit of Christ will naturally manifest itself in all men as it did in Christ Himself. Why should it not? Why should not the same Spirit manifest Itself in the same forms and modes?

Hence when persons have set their hearts upon the same object as Christ set His heart upon, they will count all things else but trifles in order to attain this. They will cheerfully make any sacrifices and count them mere trifles, enduring the cross, and despising the shame, as if all or either were matters of small account in view of an object so valuable. Who does not know that when men have a worldly fortune in view, they carry out this principle to its full extent? How many will tear themselves away from all the social endearments and comforts of home and go to California for gold, encountering hardships without number and perils of almost every sort, and yet they shrink not, because the object before them is so attractive and their hearts are so earnestly set upon it. We often see worldly men set their hearts so strongly upon some favorite object that they make no account of the greatest sacrifices. In the same manner, it was perfectly natural for Christ in His state of mind to endure the cross, despising the shame. No hardships could discourage, no perils could daunt, no scorn could deter Him; for His great end seemed too glorious, so precious, there was nothing so forbidding that He would not endure for the sake of securing it.

Often when you are thinking of His self-denials and sacrifices you ask yourself, How can this be? What motive could have induced such a course of life and of suffering? But when you get your eye upon His state of mind and see the deep love of His heart for the souls of men, all is explained. It is perfectly in accordance with a law of our mind that we count everything else of trifling value compared with the one great end upon which the heart is set. Who has not experienced at least some degree of this? When your heart has been set upon some great worldly good--property, a valued companion for life, some post of honor and emolument,--you have not deemed it a great thing to labor and toil and make many sacrifices. How many count it no great hardship to labor and toil their life long to secure a competence for themselves and their families.

Now with this universal law of mind in view, consider the great end which Christ placed before Himself. You can now understand His devotion to this great end; His readiness to make sacrifices for its attainment; you see how He could despise all the shame and endure all the pains, never shrinking for one moment from anything whatever which He had to encounter.

Now let any man have the same end in view that Christ had and he too will account all things but loss for such an object. Self-denial will be as easy and natural as a second nature. By the very laws of our mind, it is sweet to deny ourselves of a lesser good for the sake of a greater. Husbands and wives deem it no hardship to deny themselves of positive good for each other's benefit, the pleasure of giving scope to their deep and pure affection for each other readily overbalances and throws into the shade all the hardships they may be called to endure for each other's welfare. That mother will labor till her strength is

gone that she may meet the wants of the children she loves. That father will toil till he is bent and worn with years and many infirmities--so does the love of his household fill his heart, and make toil for them a daily pleasure. The fond mother will toil over her washtub year after year to educate her son at college, until at last, he comes forth a young man of promise, and she says--"I am more than paid for all my sacrifices and all my toils." You might perhaps have entered her humble dwelling at some hour when most ladies are at leisure, but you find her over her washtub. You accost her--"Madam, I am indeed sorry that you have so hard a lot--that you are doomed to such and so much labor." "Are you indeed," she replies; "I am glad of it. I enjoy it. There you see my dear children educating themselves I trust for God, and to serve their generation according to the will of God, and it is my daily joy to toil and suffer if need be for such an object. I can endure any cross and despise any shame for their sakes." You, my hearers, have seen exemplifications of this principle even among yourselves. It may have occurred to you as it has often to me that such cases develop the same spirit which we see in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, "who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross despising the shame." It is only what we always see when the mind lays hold of the great end that God lays hold of. Then men cannot grudge the sacrifices they may be called to make, however great, or frequent, or long protracted, any more than God does.

#### **REMARKS.**

1. True Christians need no appeal to their selfishness or to their self-interest to secure their highest exertions. You need not urge them to deeds of charity that they may be seen by men; not implicate their good name in any way, and the reason is, they sympathize with Christ. They have a single eye to the same end which He sought. Hence they do not ask as many others do--"Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice?" or "What profit shall we have" if we give anything for His cause? You need only place before them the good to be secured; and at once the joy springs up in their hearts, and they use most cheerfully the means to secure the good contemplated.
2. True Christians enjoy everybody's good things. There is no such thing as robbing them of happiness. If they see anyone else enjoying good, they are always sure of being blessed in it and by it, themselves. They rejoice in their neighbor's happiness and welfare as much as in their own. So long as souls are converted and blessed, they are blessed in it and rejoice over it. They will rejoice as long as God is honored and glorified. They sympathize in His infinite joy; hence, they can never be unhappy while God exists in all the fulness of His infinite blessedness.
3. Those who have the same end in view as Christ had, will have happiness similar to His. Those who sympathize with Christ cannot fail of Christ's happiness. While Christ lives, they will live. While Christ rejoices, they will rejoice. If Christ rejoices in the joy of His Father, so will they. Hence their happiness, like that of Christ, is forever interlinked with that of the infinite God. While His great ends are promoted, they will rejoice exceedingly. Why? Because this is what they most of all desire. This meets the most earnest and longing desires of their hearts. Hence, just so certainly as God is not disappointed, they will have joy. Let them know that God's great ends are secured, and their cup of joy is full. They sympathize with Him, and therefore, they cannot fail of being happy while God lives and remains the same benevolent and blessed Being.

4. It is so far from being true that sinners enjoy the good things of others, that in their selfishness they do not half enjoy their own. That sinner never has enough so long as he sees anything enjoyed by others which is not at his command. Haman may be next in honor to the great king, and yet a single Jew sitting at his gate, irreverent, may spoil his enjoyment. So with the selfish sinner always. If there is anything in the universe, not his own, he cannot be happy. Everything good which he sees must sustain a certain relation to himself, or he cannot be happy in view of it, but it rather excites his envy. O how he enlarges his desire as hell, and cannot be satisfied! All the good he sees beyond his reach is evil to him. He sees others enjoying it, and this spoils his own enjoyment of what he actually possesses. So restless is he, so anxious, so hungry, so thirsty after everybody else's happiness; so miserable because there are good things within his view which he cannot appropriate wholly to himself. Thus he is so far from enjoying other's good things, that the sight of their good, lying beyond his reach, effectually poisons his own. Poor wretched being! Who has such a tide of misery as he? If a benevolent God fills the world with happiness, this very fact dooms him to misery. How just and fitting that he should be wretched! He has chosen and cultivated the disposition which must make him so forever.

5. Every selfish person is at war with God by his very position and character as selfish. Hence if God secures His ends, the selfish sinner must fail of his. As surely as God succeeds, so surely must His selfish enemies be frustrated. Both cannot triumph for the good reason that each party is arrayed against the other, each pursuing opposite and conflicting ends. God would make all beings happy according to their merits--that is, as far as they coincide in spirit and effort with His own ends; but the selfish sinner breaks away from God's plan, and makes it his chief end to bless himself. Of course there can be not harmony; indeed there can be nothing but eternal opposition between God and all selfish beings. Hence, as I said, if God carries His point, the selfish must certainly fail of carrying theirs. While eternity endures, the selfish may hunger and lust after good; but they must forever hunger and lust in vain.

6. True Christians find their life by sacrificing it. They find their bread by throwing it on the waters; it comes to them after many days. Their own highest well-being they secure by laying their souls and their all upon the altar. Jesus Christ set them an example. He did not come to our world to please Himself. No; He came to do the will of His Father in heaven. In thus living to please God and secure the good of being, sacrificing even His own life for this end, He saved His life in the noblest sense. By self-denial He obtained the highest possible good to Himself.

This is the very nature of all benevolence. It gives away, to make its own rich, immortal gain. Its profits are always in the ratio of its expenditures. True Christians save their lives by sacrificing them for God. Christ said--"He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." It is remarkable to see what an illustration we have in the life of Christ, of the truth and the meaning of this doctrine which He taught.

7. Sinners sometimes lose their lives by trying selfishly to save them. This result follows by an inevitable law. By grasping at their own good, and by refusing to make any sacrifice, or even any sort of effort purely for other's good, they of course and of necessity lose that at which they do aim.

8. True Christians necessarily enjoy their religion. I am aware that people often talk about enjoying

religion in a way which subjects the very idea to scandal. This language is often abused and misunderstood, and as a consequence, the idea is scandalized, and hence some lose sight of the truth that religion must bring its own enjoyment.

I am aware that some make the great mistake of supposing that religion is all emotional, is all a matter of excited feelings; and hence often neglecting what is essential in true religion, and yet talking largely of their enjoying religion, they scandalize the whole subject.

Yet the real truth must forever remain; religion must be a source of real joy to its possessor. Look at the case of the mother who toils day and night for the education of her children. Ask her how she can endure such a life of toil, and she will tell you, "I enjoy the labor and the toil for the end I have in view." Ask the missionaries. You may suppose that their whole life is misery--that their numerous self-denials and sacrifices must make them wretched; but if you think so, you have made one of the greatest mistakes. These self-denials and sacrifices constitute their revenue and income of daily happiness.

To illustrate this, let me refer to a young lady who had left home, friends and country to go to the heathen, and who, the next morning after leaving port at New York, makes this entry in her private journal: "On rising this morning found that we were fairly out at sea, out of sight of land. Felt ready to give three cheers."

So, many would think that the life of Christ must have been full of sorrow; but no; few ever enjoyed so much even in this life as He; nay, more, we are safe in saying that as none ever carried out so perfectly the law of self-sacrifice for others' good, so none ever enjoyed so much of the real bliss of benevolence. In accordance with this, we hear Him say--"I have meat to eat that ye know not of." You recollect the remarkable circumstances under which this was said. Traveling in midday on foot over the hill country of Judea and Samaria, He came, weary and worn, to Jacob's well, and sat down to rest Himself there. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. The benevolent heart of the weary one felt for her spiritual welfare, and prompted efforts for her good. He spake to her of the waters of life--of the pure and spiritual Being who should be worshipped in Spirit and in truth. His tenderness and sympathy won her heart; His doctrine and His wonderful bearing convinced her that this must be her Messiah; she called her neighbors, and many seem to have been converted there. So soon did the benevolent efforts and sacrifices of Christ bring forth their fruit in the salvation of souls. Hence, though faint with hunger and toil, He could say--"I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Such labors and results really refreshed His soul, and He seems to have forgotten that He was hungry.

This is just like all true religion. It forgets its own labors and self-denials. You may go and talk to the Christian of his labors and of his self-denials, and pity him; but you don't understand his case. He is the last man to think of his toils or to pity himself. Look at the men who go to the wilds of the far West. You say to them, Brethren, you must be very unhappy; how could you bear to leave your mother and your dear brothers and sisters? They reply--You do not understand the nature of our work. We have meat to eat that you know not of. We are laboring for Jesus Christ, and He never fails to give us our wages.

A missionary in the remote North West traveled one bitter cold day last winter over ice which was

covered mostly with six inches of water. He says, "I froze my feet dreadfully, and suffered more from fatigue and cold than I recollect ever to have suffered before in one day; but I find that these days of greatest sufferings bring me my highest wages. The rich blessedness of divine love fills my soul only the more by how much the more I suffer for His name."

9. Let no man think he is doing the work of the Lord who can not enjoy it, or rather, let no man think he is doing the Lord's work when all his religious duties are like rolling a stone up hill. He needs not flatter himself that he is doing the Lord's work unless this is the very path in which he wants to go. There can be no greater mistake than is made by those who think they have the religion of Jesus Christ, and yet do not enjoy it. The fact is, if they are doing His work they can bear and endure all things for Christ's sake, and find delight in it too. They will not ever be called to suffer as He did in degree, and yet we know that even in His case, the cross was made light by a view of the joy set before Him. His dreadful cross was not a small matter in itself considered, but it became small when compared with the great end in view. And so it will be with the Christian.

10. It will always be found true that real Christians make light work of their religion, just in proportion as they make a just estimate of the great ends in view and as they earnestly set their hearts upon those ends. In the same degree as they give themselves up to their work will they find their trials light and their joys abounding.

On the other hand, as they swerve away from God will their trials and crosses seem great and unendurable, and they will feel as if they did not know how to meet their difficulties.

11. Self-indulgent persons are not Christians. The proof that they are not is simple and short; they are not Christ-like--for "Christ pleased not Himself." And "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

12. The most laborious and self-denying Christians are the most happy. The more sacrifices, honestly made for the good of souls, the more blest in the very deed themselves. Only let his eye be single--let it be in his heart to do all for God, and he cannot fail to give the deepest and purest joy in the midst of his toils and sacrifices.

Great mistakes are wont to be made in this matter. Indeed sinners usually make them. Many suppose that to give up all idea of being rich is almost awful. It is a great thing, scarcely to be endured for any consideration. That young man says in his heart, Why should I go and preach and toil for almost nothing, laboring for a very small salary and for a most ungrateful people? Ah indeed! You cannot make up your mind to follow in the steps of Him who "had not where to lay His head," and who "came unto His own and His own received Him not." It would involve too many sacrifices! But did you not know that after all, the most devoted and self-sacrificing ministers of Christ, are among the happiest people in the world? You entirely mistake, young man, if you think otherwise. Even when nobody thanks them, God smiles on their souls and all is joy and blessedness within. If nobody else gives to supply their wants, God does. He knows how to supply the great deep want of the soul for peace and joy, and He is not forgetful to do so towards His faithful, self-denying servants. Ask the faithful missionary of the cross in what portion of his life he has had most satisfaction. You will be told that by how much the more he has sacrificed, by so much the greater is his joy. He will say to

you--I love my work; it is good for me to endure the cross, despising the shame. Ask any true missionary--Are you rewarded for your toils and self-denials? He will reply--O if I might see salvation flow to those heathen tribes, it would be my greatest joy. Nothing else could make me so happy. It is the hope of this success and the consciousness of pleasing God in my labors that makes all my toils sweet. Why should I not give myself up to such a work with my utmost might?

13. Persons who have no true religion are made less happy by what religion they have. Look at such a man. If his heart is not in his work and upon it, he certainly gets no good from it. Let a man preach the gospel who does not love the work, and all is labor without compensation; toil without a redeeming object. But if he loves his work, it sheds a fresh and precious balm over his spirit; and fills his daily cup with joy.

14. The most selfish are the most unhappy. The very fact of being selfish is an infinite mistake. If a man keeps his money for selfish purposes, instead of pouring it out bountifully for others' good, he makes the greatest mistake possible. If he thinks to enjoy it most by self-gratification, he does not begin to know what the highest enjoyment is. He could not suppose so if his heart were set upon God's work.

By the very laws of mind, a man is never so much delighted with the disposal of his property as when it goes most directly to promote his most favorite object. He hates to bestow upon objects foreign to his heart's chief desire. Whenever, therefore, you see Christians giving grudgingly, you may know that selfishness is the law of their life. For all men, and of course Christians too, will naturally make most efforts to secure their chief object. Whatever stands highest in their esteem and regard will command the most of their efforts, and of their money. If they are selfish, they will think they cannot do better than to lay out their money for self. Hence you will see them constantly shaping all their plans to give little and keep much. Why, say they, should I not do this thing since it will be for my good? Instead of finding their highest satisfaction in giving, they find it in hoarding.

Did you ever see a miser? If so, you have seen a man who grudged everything he gave unless the object were to secure property. I knew one in New York. He wore a buckskin coat for his only covering, and as this was never washed, he made an important saving of money on it. He seemed to grudge himself even his necessary food, and to find all the comfort he ever had in hoarding up money. So all-controlling did his passion become that he could starve himself for the sake of laying up the more money. Of course when this passion of money-hoarding is so terribly developed that men will pinch and wring everything they can out of themselves to put into their great iron chest, you need not expect them to be merciful, if they are even so much as just, towards their fellow men. O how terribly does that man curse both himself and his race who gives himself up to this form of selfishness!

But Christianity is entirely another thing. It sets the heart with most intense and all-consuming energy upon the great object of serving God and one's generation according to the will of God. It is the same great principle which, energizing in the depth of the Infinite Mind, moved Him to create beings whom He might bless. The same glorious principle gave birth to the plan of redemption. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" to save it. There arose an exigency. A race had fallen, and must be rescued or lost. The Divine Word saw and felt the exigency; rushed forward to the rescue; seized as it were upon human flesh, that in and with our nature He might live and labor, suffer, bleed



and die. This great work became with Him an all-absorbing passion. See Him toil in Judea, traverse the regions of Samaria and Galilee; hear Him pray during the long hours of the night; hear His deep groans in the garden of Gethsemane, and mark that bloody sweat; see Him on the cross, pierced and bleeding;--then ask--What is all this? What but the working out of the great principle of benevolence--love to God and love to man, consuming the energies of His being! Mark how He rolls off to the right and to the left all other objects that invite attention and would divert Him from His work. He suffers nothing to intervene between His heart and the labors and sacrifices needful to effect the work of human salvation.

And now must it be deemed so great a cross for His people to spare even a dollar to complete this work by sending the gospel to every creature? Shall they grudge their shillings where Jesus Christ gave ungrudgingly His heart's blood! It must be that many Christians are under a great and radical mistake in this matter. Every true Christian as really has a cross to endure and shame to despise as Christ had, although his crucifixion may come in a very different form. But it is equally his duty to live and to die for the promotion of the same great object. This is so far from seeming to be a hardship to the real Christian, that it is the very thing which before all other things he would choose. Ask him which among all the objects of life he deems most precious, and most desirable. He will tell you at once, this, of suffering and toiling for Jesus Christ and for His cause. I ask no higher honor, and no purer enjoyment than to deny myself and bear my cross for my dear Lord and Master.

15. If men would be merely comfortable, they must abandon living for self. I need not say that none can enjoy selfishness. I say more. If men would not be positively unhappy they must cease to be selfish. Self is so utterly unreasonable in its demands, and makes you so wretched if all its demands are not met, there is no living in peace unless it is thoroughly kept under. No man, or woman either, ever yet satisfied self by indulgence. Like the horse-leach, it cries forever, Give, give; and might well have been numbered among the three and four things which never say--"It is enough." Consequently, persons only torture themselves and make their own happiness impossible by giving scope to their selfishness.

16. Those who have Christ's Spirit will have also His peace of mind. They who "bear His cross will wear His crown," not in the future world only, but in the present. "If they suffer with Him, they shall also be glorified together."

17. You may see why so few professors really enjoy their religion. If their eye were single for God, they would not fail of enjoying His service; but being selfish, they starve themselves, and pave their path with many thorns. The principle which prompts all their religious duties is, that they had rather do them than go to hell. These religious duties give them no pleasure, and never would be done for their own sake; but they can be endured as a choice of evils, it being better to endure them than do so much worse. The hope of escaping hell thereby makes even these religious duties tolerable. All these toils and hardships are better than hell. But as for positive satisfaction in their Christian work, they know nothing about it. If they want any present satisfaction, of course they look for that in the way of self-gratification.

Let the reader pause and ask--Am I the character described here? Is this a painting of my heart?

18. Selfish persons may as well give up their selfishness first as last, for they cannot get good by it. Have you not seen plainly enough that it is of no use to be selfish; that if you gain anything, it is all of no use as to the matter of substantial enjoyment? If you should gain the whole world, it would be of no avail to you as a fund of enduring happiness. There can therefore be no real motive--no good motive for being selfish. Have you not often seen this so clearly as to be compelled to say--"I will never again act for self, for I may just as well not act at all, and better too." It does no good to seek to gratify self, for it only serves to enlarge one's desire even as hell, and it can never be satisfied. It is as if a man diseased should drink to slake his thirst, and it only makes him the more thirsty; or should eat to allay his hunger and it only sharpens his appetite the more. What then can you gain by pushing on in this direction or in that, to gratify the insatiate demands of self? Suppose you should drive your efforts selfishly even for your own salvation. You make a great mistake--yea, an infinite mistake. You will only make the matter inexpressibly worse. I can well recollect a crisis in my own religious history. I felt that there was not another step to take in the direction I was going. I had pursued my worldly interests a long time, all in vain; I had sought God selfishly, but all in vain; and I now betook myself to mighty prayer as I supposed, as if I would pull down blessings at any rate upon my needy soul. Often since, I have looked back with wonder to that moment. I came then to see and I actually said to myself--I may just as well stop this course of seeking now as ever. I hastened away to the woods to pray, pressed with the consideration--I am a selfish man--altogether selfish. I must come to a dead stand in this course; my selfish efforts are of no use, and even my selfish prayers are nothing better than an abomination before God. I had gone out with the determination never to leave the place without giving myself to God. I could see that all had been perfectly selfish, and that now the thing God demanded of me was to desist from my selfishness and give up myself supremely and wholly to Him.

While laboring in Western New York, I saw a young woman who seemed to be by nature and education most amiable and lovely. Indeed, she was regarded by her friends as a perfect model of propriety. Her sisters and relatives could not bear to think that she was a sinner, or to hear her spoken to as a sinner. Yet she was selfish. When I saw her I could not help being strongly impressed with this fact, and urged it earnestly upon her conscience. At length she saw it and then exclaimed, I have sown to the wind and I must reap the whirlwind. My whole heart is selfish. I see that I might as well make no effort for salvation as to make selfish ones, and that truly I have but one right and hopeful way, and this is, to renounce my selfishness at once and forever.

See that young man selfishly pursuing his education. What do you want of your education? What will you do with it? You reply, "O, perhaps I shall be a great man." Then persisting in your selfishness, you will be the greater in hell. "Perhaps I shall get to be the President of these United States." Then, unless you repent of your selfishness, you will sink to be the merest drudge in hell. "Oh," says that young man, "I shall get into some learned profession and make a brilliant display of my talents, and make an impression on the world." And will all this make you happy? If selfishness rule in your heart, it will only make you a greater curse to yourself. You may drive in this direction and in that, you can only fill up the cup of your own misery, if you will make self your idol god. Suppose you toil for fame; there will be a canker-worm at its root. What good will it do you? All is against you and nothing can work for your real good so long as you will not yield your heart to God and crucify your selfishness.

Do you ask, Who will show me any good? I will show you all the good you can ever need. I have

been showing you today where real good is to be found. You have money, and do you ask, what money is good for? To do good with. This is all. What is the strong arm for, and the ardor of youthful energy? To do good with--nothing else. O young man, you who do not want to be a minister of the gospel because there will be so much hardship and so little emolument--if you don't know the peace and blessedness of self-denial, you know nothing yet as you need to know. You have not yet begun to learn how to live for real blessedness.

Living for the general good is the only way to secure your own individual good. If you would be happy, pour out your heart for others' good. Set your heart on the great end which God is laboring to secure, and your happiness is safe.

Brethren, is it a matter of real experience with you that you enjoy your religion? Do you enjoy it even without any of the accompaniments of superadded respectability, and public confidence, and social regard? Do you enjoy the simple business of doing good, in itself, and for its own sake? Is self-denial for Christ's sake, a positive enjoyment to you in view of the great and glorious end of the joy set before you of honoring God and doing good? Does your religion, attended though it be with many toils and trials, become to you daily the very elixir of life? How is this?

## **Judicial Blindness**

Lecture XI

August 1, 1849

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Text.--John 9:39, 40: "And Jesus said, 'For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see, might be made blind.' And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, 'Are we blind also?' Jesus said unto them, 'If ye were blind, ye should have no sin, but now ye say, "we see": therefore your sin remaineth.'"

In discussing the subject presented in these words I propose,

*I. To notice some truths that are assumed in this text.*

*II. To point out some principles of the divine administration which are revealed here.*

*III. To adduce some illustrations of these principles as revealed in the history of God's providences.*

## **I. Some truths that are assumed in this text.**

- 1. Christ obviously assumes that obligation is conditioned upon light. "If ye were blind ye should have no sin." Beyond question the blindness here spoken of is mental not physical, so that our Savior here explicitly asserts that if the Pharisees had no knowledge of duty they would have no sin; which of course assumes that the presence of some knowledge of duty is a condition of sin -- and consequently of moral obligation.
- 2. Christ also assumes that the guilt of disobedience is graduated by the degree of our knowledge. In proportion as we are enlightened, is our guilt, if we resist the demands of conscience, enhanced.

These principles are implied not only in our text but universally throughout the Bible. The careful reader of his Bible cannot fail to notice this.

In this as in other respects its teachings are most entirely accordant with the convictions of our own minds. Every unsophisticated mind affirms that these principles are righteous and that nothing else could be.

## **II. I am to point out some principles of the divine government which are revealed in these words.**

- 1. God does not require of us natural impossibilities. If He did He might require us to do duty although we do not understand either what the requirement is, or the authority of Him who requires it. Right over against this Christ says, "If ye were blind ye should have no sin." What principle is implied in this language? Beyond all question, this; that if we have no knowledge of duty, we can incur no guilt by neglect. Indeed, neglect always implies something known, which is neglected. As also transgression implies some known rule or law which is wickedly passed over.

Where no knowledge of law exists, it is impossible that there should be either culpable neglect or transgression. And God never requires such impossibilities. He never demands the making of brick without straw. As it is impossible for men physically blind to see physical objects; so is it impossible for men utterly ignorant of duty to act morally; therefore God never requires them to do it.

- 2. God really does require of us according to the blessings we have received. He holds us responsible for the light He has given us. As Christ said to the Jews, "But now ye say, "we see;" therefore your sin remaineth." You profess to be enlightened; grant that you are; then your sin is not only actual but great.

You will observe that the Pharisees scornfully repelled the idea that they were morally blind. "What!" they would say; "do you mean to insinuate that we have not the true knowledge of God? Indeed we have it, before any people on earth." "Very well," said our Lord; "then on your own ground you have the greater sin." Now this shows most plainly that Christ assumed the principle of guilt according to light, and neither holds the morally dark-minded responsible, nor exempts the enlightened from responsibility.

- 3. God will visit with judicial blindness those who have light, but abuse it. "For judgment," said Christ, "have I come into this world, that those who see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." What is this "judgment?" Christ Himself explains it. It is awarding retribution according to deeds -- especially those deeds of mind which respect the use or abuse of moral light. He comes to try with the presentation of light those who have not hitherto enjoyed it, (the dark-minded heathen) and to doom to judicial blindness those (the Jews) who have had light to see by, but have neglected to improve and use it. Christ comes to smite them with blindness for their great sin.

Since the sin lies in rejecting light, it is plain that the greater the light is which God gives to a people or to an individual, the more certainly and speedily will He visit them with judicial blindness, if they reject this light. All this seems plainly implied in what Christ says here.

### **III. Illustrations of these principles.**

- 1. We have one in the case of these Scribes and Pharisees. They had long enjoyed much light respecting God and their duty. In their hands they held many clear and precious prophecies of the coming Messiah, prophecies which unfolded His spiritual character, and which might have shown them that Jesus of Nazareth is the personage of whom Moses and the prophets spake.

But they did not relish the spiritual views of the Messiah; they preferred a different character; the wish became father to corresponding thoughts, and they formed an ideal mainly from their own hearts' imagination. To this ideal the man of Nazareth did not correspond; so they rejected Him; and God by consequence rejected them. Christ's actual coming added nothing to their light, but only confounded them in greater, deeper darkness. They had been enlightened above any other people on earth; but their worldly, sensual views, begotten in a worldly, sensual heart, led them to reject Him who came as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the result was that they speedily sunk into darkness more dense and dreadful than that of any people on earth. The clearest exhibitions of truth only blinded them the more. Their wicked hearts seemed to react against the truth only the more violently by how much the brighter it shone.

- 2. The same was true of the nation as a whole although there were many individual exceptions. Among the more illiterate portions of the people were many who had never heartily sympathized in the great movements against Jesus of Nazareth; who had been the led and not the leaders; and who not unnaturally embraced the true light when it came distinctly before them. It is a most remarkable fact that Christ was obliged to choose His disciples from among the illiterate and unenlightened classes -- inasmuch as those who had been educated after the Jewish mode had almost to a man become so hardened by long resistance of the light they had, as to render their reception of more, quite hopeless. To those who had enjoyed most light, and abused it, the teachings of Jesus Christ were only darkness. They might have seen before Christ came, but having made themselves voluntarily blind, they were precisely in a state to be cursed and not blessed by His teaching.
- 3. We often see the same principle illustrated in the case of children brought up in highly

religious families. Such are in danger of experiencing the greatest moral blindness. Unless they embrace the truths made known to them, they must experience the terribly hardening influence of knowing yet not doing their duty.

Few men have lived under stronger light than Aaron Burr. A grandson of the elder President Edwards, son of an eminently pious mother, his parents and friends holding forth before him the best forms of gospel light then known, who could be more favored than he? Pierpont Edwards was another man of perhaps equally favorable early training -- yet how dreadful the depth of hardness and crime to which he sank! If you had searched the whole world you might not have found two children brought up under stronger light and clearer instruction than they. Yet what sons were they of such pious parents! Aaron Burr, and Pierpont Edwards, stood among the highest class of gifted intellects; but O, how did they fall like Lucifer, son of the morning! The very name of Aaron Burr became a hissing and a bye-word. Few men have better earned a deep and lasting infamy. He trod the pearls of divine knowledge under his feet, and what other result could follow than judicial blindness and the most utter moral desolation!

I might name a great many cases of this sort where men have been reared in the very garden of the Lord -- nurtured on the praying hearts of some of God's dearest children; yet resisting all light and all persuasion, they became devils incarnate! Some are so presumptuous, and so misjudge, as to suppose that for His honor's sake God will not suffer the children of so pious parents to go to hell. The greatest possible mistake! The truth is that when sinners resist so much light the honor of God demands that He should withhold His Spirit, and let them alone, and ere long, often most suddenly, He turns them into hell. Since God has called, but they refused, therefore in dread retribution, He says, "Now ye may call, and I will not answer. Ye may make many prayers and I will not hear."

- 4. On the same principle, many instances occur in which those congregations which have enjoyed the most enlightening instruction, have been at length given up of God to become the most hardened and desolate of men.

Some of you have heard of or read the sermons of Pres. Davies. You know them to be among the most excellent sermons ever preached. I read them in my early life with the deepest interest. For a long time I felt a great desire to learn the history of that congregation and church to whom he preached. At last I fell in with a man who knew their history most intimately. There is no place, said he, in all the land, where so deep darkness reigns, and reigns with such fearful sway as there. The church on that once consecrated spot has but one surviving male member.

As usual, where many are greatly blessed, others too are greatly cursed, and sometimes, for an awful warning to the latter class, God lets the swelling waves of moral desolation roll over a place, and almost utterly extinguish the light of the candlestick which shone on so many eyes in vain.

- 5. Another illustration may be seen in the astonishing blindness of many who embrace all forms of error and religious delusion. I can recollect several whom I knew in my early childhood.

They were brought up under the prayers and instructions of very pious parents and teachers. Yet they were the first to embrace Mormonism. Others seemed to be foremost in yielding a ready assent to Universalism. Others have embraced Davisism, running after every foolish and absurd thing, discarding all they used to believe, as if they would have their revenge on those blessed truths for the unwelcome restraints and annoyances which themselves had experienced from such enemies. It seemed to be a delight to them to explode all they had ever believed. Why? Let their history only be known and you will see why. They were visited with judicial blindness. Christ comes to them as to the ancient Jews, that they which see might be made blind. Can there be a more terrific doom!

Go and visit those places which have been blessed with great revivals. You will find that those who have been blessed with the greatest light, but have rejected it, are fearfully blinded and hardened. You will find Universalism and all the other ridiculous forms of error springing right up where the brightest light has shone, and where the greatest revivals have prevailed. Right here, among that very people where God has done so much to enlighten men's minds, there, among those who resisted that light, you will find more errors, and errors more pernicious springing up than anywhere else. There you will find men ready to swallow down greedily the most ridiculous and disgusting forms of error.

When men have been deeply convicted of sin and have resisted their convictions, they will almost inevitably fall into the most profound moral darkness. They will get entirely bewildered; will seem to lose their delicate perception of nice moral distinctions, and readily call good, evil; and evil, good. In this state of mind they are ready to embrace all forms of fatal and delusive error. Nothing is too gross and revolting for them to receive and love. How often have I been surprised to hear what men would say who had run this career -- things which it would seem impossible for any man in his senses to believe. Indeed you cannot account for their believing such things, except on the supposition that God has given them up to judicial blindness. This blindness is far greater in their case than ever occurs among those who have never been so highly instructed. The violence done to their moral nature is more terrible, and consequently the shock it receives is the greater. In this state of fearful blindness, all means for their salvation are nearly or quite hopeless. Others under the same means may be enlightened and saved; but they will be only the more benighted, by how much the clearer and stronger the light you pour upon their sightless moral eye-balls. Their hearts seem to be set upon resisting the light, and their reaction against it will be the greater according as the action to be resisted is the more annoying. They "hate the light, and will not come to it lest their deeds should be reprov'd."

Ye who have been in revivals and have watched the subsequent course of those who have passed through them unblessed, can bear your testimony to what I am saying. You have seen many cases which seemed most strange and unaccountable, only on the supposition that "God has sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Not long since I had a long conversation with a man who had been carried away with Davisism. To my astonishment he told me, in substance, that in his belief Davis was far ahead of Jesus Christ. He thinks it an honor to Christ that Davis speaks well of Him, as if the name of Christ needed to be honored, or could be, by the commendation of such a man as Davis!

The man of whom I speak has been greatly enlightened; he has been wont to hold up his light for other men to walk by; but now, alas! how has his light been turned to darkness! Who that knew him once could believe what their eyes now see of him and their ears hear?

Again, who does not know that where churches have become formal, they have soon been given up to strong delusion. For example, the Papal church. When they refused to conform in heart to the truth they held, into what ridiculous and gross delusions did they fall! Down, down, they went with rapid pace into the grossest darkness.

On the same principle many of the most enlightened sinners become infidels. Rejecting what light they have, God gives them over to judicial blindness, and they are then ripe for the grossest delusions. Commonly you will find the most bitter infidels among those who have known most of the gospel -- who have been most pressed with its claims, and whose minds have consequently become most sore and restive under its galling demands. They have done most violence to their moral natures, and God has righteously given them over to the most deep and damning delusions.

## REMARKS.

1. Those who have been so much enlightened as to see and admit the truth, have reached a point where it is most perilous to stop. This is the last place at which man should think of stopping. It is nothing less than utter madness to stop there. If you were to hear the cry of fire in the dead of night, and even suppose it to be probably a false alarm, yet you would naturally look out and see, and if you found all well you would rest again. But if you should find that verily your house is all on fire -- if this truth should flash on your mind, and you could not but admit it, what should we think of you if you should sit down and invite sleep again? Think of you! Of course, that you are mad or deranged -- or it not, that you are infinitely wicked! What? let your house burn down upon your wife and children, and make no effort to save either of them! And are you not mad that you should do this?

Now apply this illustration. You know the gospel; you admit its truth. You start up and find, in fact, that you are upon the brink of an eternal hell. You see the deep pit opening beneath your feet, and the flames rolling up just ready to seize upon you -- and yet you can lie down and sleep! Can anything be so perilous as this? You know that this hell is kindled to burn forever! You know that the destruction of the sinner there is "without remedy." You know that no other loss can begin to compare with the loss of the soul. Your own soul is in most certain and dreadful peril, and yet you can remain inactive, as if all this were only a false alarm! O, was there ever such infatuation? Better that you had never known the gospel, than that having known it, you should turn away from its proffered salvation. Infinitely less guilty and less dangerous for you it were, that you should never have seen a Bible -- never have heard a sermon, never have been made the subject of one prayer.

2. Many seem to bless themselves for the light they enjoy, and give themselves great credit for knowing and admitting the gospel in theory. "O," say they, "we are not infidels, not we! We know all about the gospel." But do you obey it? "O no, we are in no haste about obeying it. We shall have a convenient season yet." So you resist the light God has given you! Your knowledge of the gospel is, so far, a curse to you and not a blessing. You are treasuring up fearful wrath against the day of wrath,



and can do nothing else than this so long as you withhold your heart from its claims.

3. We see whence come the multitude of errors that overspread the land. Their number and grossness are just what might be expected where God has so greatly blessed the people as He has in our churches. In all cases this will be found to be the course; great light abused, has resulted in gross delusion. Men have resisted God's claims and grieved away His Spirit; and now the Spirit withdraws; Satan comes in with seven other spirits more wicked; he takes full possession, and the last state is worse than the first. All forms of fanaticism revive; spiritual blindness ensues; the men who would not come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd may now have darkness to their hearts' content; they have loved it and God says, let them have it! and on, on, they go down the dark road to hell.

4. Those who are judicially blinded will usually give this indication of the fact -- they will never take warning! You may utter the most solemn admonitions in their ears, and seek to press the truth upon their conscience; you labor in vain! They will not believe you unless you tell them lies! If you speak to them the truth, they will not believe. Speak to them lies, and prophecy deceits, and they will hail you as a friend and a brother. But speak only the truth, and you can gain no access to their hearts. You can carry them whither you please with error; but you cannot lead them into truth. You cannot reach them with warnings, for they will not take the alarm.

How remarkable that when the gospel preacher sounds the note of warning, the tender conscience will feel its utmost power, and perhaps be even extremely alarmed; while those to whom it really belongs will not suffer it to touch themselves. They leave it to pass by them as the idle wind which men regard not.

Such give the strongest proof that they are judicially blinded.

5. It is always to be expected that individuals, families or communities who enjoy great light, but will not yield their hearts to it, will turn out badly. You might select from such a community the most horrible instances of depravity. Such families will furnish cases at which the Christian would stand aghast. These are, under God's government, only the natural results of having and abusing great light.

6. The revivals of the last thirty years have resulted in the judicial blindness of multitudes of modern Scribes and Pharisees. It is to be feared that many ministers even have fallen into a most alarming state of declension, as the result of failing to act up to the light God gave them. Many churches too have gone backward with a fearful and perpetual backsliding. They should have pressed onward and upward; but they did not embrace all the truth which God revealed to them; they shrunk from bearing the cross; they held parley with the spirit of the world; and a dreadful blindness has come over them. Although in many churches there are many pious members, yet in not a few it would seem that the majority are given up to believe a lie, and to lapse into a most horrible state of carnality and declension. In fact they are often opposed to any effort to promote revivals of religion! What can this mean? What does it indicate? After having experienced such great blessings from revivals, why do they now oppose revivals? Why is this? Go back and trace the history of those who were only nominally in them, and you will get the answer. They never loved revivals. They had more light in those revivals than they chose to admit or obey; hence their eyes were blinded and their hearts hardened. They do not want to be annoyed again with such appeals to their consciences. They dread

to be brought again into such burning contact with convicting truth. Consider these things, and you will see reason enough for all the facts now present in the history of the churches.

7. When Christ comes among a people, some are blinded rather than enlightened by His coming. This is probably a universal fact. I have often known the blindness of persons increase precisely as the work of God increased. As light progressed, and truth beamed and blazed with increasing power, their hearts grew hard and their eyes dark. When it seemed impossible that they should resist, then they seemed only the more opposed, and the more embittered against the truth.

For a long time this seemed a great wonder to me, but now I understand it. The reason of it is most apparent. Men who do not love the truth will resist it till they have paralyzed the power of truth upon their will; till they have grieved the Spirit of God away, and nearly put out the moral eyes of the soul; then they can believe any lie and deny any truth. Then they are ready for any deeds of darkness, or for any depths of absurdity.

8. In looking over the history of this place, I have said to myself -- Now I shall not be disappointed to see enemies to the truth rising up among us, growing more and more benighted in mind and besotted in error till they become darkened and deluded beyond any other people on the earth. What have we seen elsewhere in the history of the church? Just what our Savior would have us expect -- "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not, might see, and that they which see might be made blind."

Contemplating the state of things here, my mind has been greatly impressed with the fear that we should get into a state in which God's honor would demand that He should blot us out and leave us to moral ruin. We may say -- "We have Abraham to our father" -- yet it may avail us as little as it did the Jews. We may have said it too long already, and may have relied upon it too much. None the less reason for our relation to father Abraham is there to fear that God will give us up. On the contrary, just in proportion as we have been favored with light may we expect that God will send on us judicial blindness. We may think we are doing well; but God will surely carry out the changeless principles of His moral government just as He always has done in all ages and in all other places.

In my more personal conversations with this people, I am struck to find so many who are greatly in the dark. Instead of advancing in knowledge, and becoming more and more enlightened, they are only the more darkened and confused; they say things now which they would not have said years ago. How often has it happened that persons have begun to doubt, and finally to yield up opinions which they once held strongly, progressing continually forward towards giving up the truth they once knew. Now take warning, beloved; see if it be true that you really embrace in your heart the truth you profess to believe. If ever in all my life my soul was filled with trembling, it was when this question came home to my mind -- Does my heart really embrace the truth which I believe, or is it merely received in my intelligence? O there was a searching power in this question, and I could not help feeling it. I found myself continually on my knees, crying out -- "Lord, I never knew this before. Did I ever believe this before? Surely this seems to me like a new gospel." So much more thoroughly did I now see the marrow and fatness of the gospel, that it seemed as if all my former faith in it had been only as a dream, and not a reality. When God was making such revelations as kept my very being all on fire, then the question -- Is not all my faith in the gospel a merely intellectual belief? pressed upon me with

unwonted power. Then I cried out -- "Lord, don't enlighten me and yet suffer my heart to draw back, for if Thou dost, I shall certainly go down by the shortest road to destruction."

Brethren, do you believe with all your heart what you profess to believe? Some say -- "I believe the doctrine of sanctification." If you do, you should embrace it with all your hearts. Failing to embrace it heartily, you resist the truth; and then the result will naturally be that God will leave you to darkness, and you will find a short path to error, delusion and damnation. If you will not receive into your heart the truth you know, you cannot rationally hope that you have a particle of real religion. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light" -- for he loves all that is real light, and bids it most welcome to his soul. Do you suppose you can be a Christian and yet refuse to obey known truth? Nay, verily; a disobedient Christian can no more be, than an obedient, dutiful sinner. When you see a truth which you yet refuse to obey, in the very nature of the case you abjure your religion. You are at once on the ground of God's enemies. You are saying to God -- "I am not Thy servant." There can be no greater mistake than to suppose that men can be religious and yet not obey known truth. Nothing is more plainly taught in the Bible than this, that if you "keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, you are guilty of all." You really evince a spirit of disobedience to God and of disregard to His law; and this is just what God regards as sin. It is in the very nature of the case impossible that a man should be allowed to say before God -- "Lord, I will obey this precept, and this; but I will not obey that, and that." There cannot be the least particle of virtue, piety, or obedience in this. So long therefore as there is one promise which you know, but do not embrace, you cannot heartily embrace any. So long as there is one threatening known, but not regarded, you do not really regard any.

I am afraid there is a great delusion in the church on this point. Many think they have considerable religion, while they say frankly -- "I know I am living in a great deal of sin." They flatter themselves that they are all pretty good Christians, because they are not the greatest sinners. Some degree of known disobedience they think to be quite admissible in Christian character. Must not such persons be utterly fallen from all real obedience? Are their hearts at all with God? Nay, verily.

Let the question be asked -- Do you believe that you ought to live in entire obedience to all the known will of God? Yes. Most will say -- we believe that. Do you believe that through gospel grace you may do so? No doubt of it. Well, do you practice accordingly? O no, we never professed to practice on this doctrine. Let others make their high professions; for our part we choose not to make any such professions. Perhaps you even find fault with those who do make such professions, and think yourselves quite as good Christians as they. Perhaps you misjudge them and perhaps they may not be either prudent or humble; but no matter; if all the world should profess the highest experience, and should then apologize before your very eyes, your guilt could be none the less if you have seen your duty and your privilege, and have resisted this light from God to your soul. You must keep up with the light God gives you, or you are ruined. There can be no exception to this righteous law -- no failure in its swift and terrible execution.

Then let every hearer ask himself -- Do I embrace and obey all known truth? Do I reverence every precept and apply by faith every promise?

But you say -- "I don't pretend to be sanctified." I answer, you did profess to be sanctified when you came out from the world and separated yourself from the ungodly. You do profess to take the Holy

Ghost for your Sanctifier every time you renew your church covenant. You solemnly declare that you renounce the world and all sin, and take the Lord Jehovah to be your God and portion. If this be not the truth, what did you profess? To be living in sin? To be serving the devil in part and Christ in part? No, you said no such thing. If you were honest, you could not possibly have meant any such thing. The church when she opened her arms to receive you assumed that you came, as the whole-hearted servants and followers of Jesus Christ. And now are you eager to back out from your covenant-responsibilities upon the claim that you never professed to renounce all sin? What does this mean? Are you aware that in this matter you have to deal with God, and not with man only? Did you not know that He who walks among the golden candlesticks searches the hearts and tries the reins? Will you forget that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?

## **The Peace of God Ruling in the Christian's Heart**

Lecture XII

August 15, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Col. 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."

In speaking from this verse, I propose to show,

*I. What is intended by "the peace of God."*

*II. What we should understand by its "ruling in the heart."*

*III. The conditions under which God enjoys peace.*

*IV. The conditions of our enjoying a similar peace.*

**I. The peace, called in our text the "peace of God" is obviously so called for two reasons:**

- 1. Because it is the same in kind which God Himself enjoys; and
- 2. Because He imparts it. It comes to the Christian from God through the work of His Spirit on the heart. It is God's peace because it is like His in character, and from Him as to its origin.

**II. Peace may be said to "rule in the heart," when it prevails over all disturbing influences;**

**when it becomes stable, abiding and all-controlling.**

There are ever wont to be more or less causes in operation either external or internal to disturb our peace. Hence it can be said to "rule" in the heart only when it triumphs over all opposing influences, and abides, firmly established in the soul.

**III. It is not improper for us to inquire reverently after the conditions under which God enjoys peace of mind.**

In the outset of our inquiry we have the fact that God is a moral agent, and in this respect is like ourselves. Or rather in this respect we are made in His image, and hence knowing ourselves, we learn the attributes requisite for moral agency, the laws of their action, and consequently the conditions under which a moral agent can enjoy peace of mind. Pursuing this course of inquiry in respect to God it is easy to see,

- 1. That His powers of mind must be at peace with each other. All within the depths of the infinite mind must be in harmony. For example, His will must be in entire agreement with His reason. He must evermore choose that which His reason affirms to wisest and best.

Again, His sensibility, must be in harmony with His reason. He must be in such a state of mind as not to feel either more or less intensely than reason dictates, and such moreover as not to have feelings other in kind than His reason affirms they should be. For obviously, if His sensibilities were not in harmony with His reason they would necessarily disturb the repose of His mind because they would disturb its harmonious action.

- 2. In the same manner, if His will were not in harmony with His reason and His conscience, the most terrific discord would supplant the peace of the divine mind.
- 3. It must be therefore that God has no desires that are unreasonable, or impossible, or wrong; for if He had, He could not be at peace with Himself. There would be a deep and fearful struggle within -- the energies of His infinite mind reaching after something that could not be attained, or aspiring after objects which reason or conscience forbids.

Again, it is essential to His peace that God should desire nothing inconsistent with the highest good. If He has any desires whatever, inconsistent with the highest good, He has no right to gratify them; and hence a struggle within must ensue -- a struggle, too, of a fearful and terrible character -- one whose energy must utterly destroy the internal peace of His mind. Hence if God has peace, it must follow that He has no desires inconsistent with the highest good.

Again, it is an essential condition of the peace of God that He should have no selfish desires. For if He had any selfish desires whatever, His benevolent heart must utterly disapprove them, and hence a conflict must ensue, and God must be at once at war with Himself.

Again, the peace which God enjoys must be conditioned upon the fact that He is conscious of doing as well as He can in all cases and evermore. For if otherwise, then He must know it, and know it, He cannot be happy. God can no more be happy than we can, while He is conscious of not doing the very best He can. It is essential to His peace of mind that He should be fully conscious of having done the very best He could during the whole eternity of His existence.

Again, His peace must be conditioned upon the fact that He is satisfied with Himself. For if He is not, He cannot have internal peace.

- 4. Moreover, He must be satisfied on the whole with the results of all He has done or has purposed to do. He must have in His own mind the assurance that He shall secure the great end upon which His heart is set. He must see that He has chosen the best possible end, and the wisest means for attaining that end. Seeing as He does the end from the beginning, -- His infinite mind sweeping in its vast survey all events and their causes and results, He must see that on the whole the system of His choice is the best possible, and that therefore nothing more or other remains to be desired. Viewed therefore as a whole, He must be satisfied both with the ends to be secured, with all the means, and with all the modes of using those means.
- 5. It should be considered that there are many things that result incidentally, and it may be, unavoidably, from the best possible system of means -- things which may be in themselves most distressing. Such, for example, is all the sin that exists in our world. It exists, as I suppose, unavoidably, in a system of moral government. Under such a system agents must be left so free that they can sin if they choose to do so; hence there must of necessity be a liability to the evils of sin. God must have foreseen from the beginning that in the progress of His moral government over men a great many evils would spring up which in themselves would be very trying, and which if viewed apart from their relations and bearings, would greatly disturb His peace. Yet on the whole, taking into view all the results, He has no regrets, for He sees that this system, even with all its incidental evils, is yet the best possible.

Again, it is another condition of His peace that there shall be nothing in all the universe which is to Him a cause of regret. He must know nothing of those regrets to which we are exposed, for He sees everything resulting as He foresaw it would. His mind, therefore, can rest peacefully in all this, just as He foresaw it would rest.

- 6. It is essential to the peaceful attitude of the divine mind that He should view all things in their relations and results as developed under His over-ruling providence and not separate and isolated from them, as our finite minds usually do, and often are compelled to. We often see only one link of a chain at a time, and hence we may not even dream that there is a chain; or if we do, we cannot tell what points the extreme ends connect. We are quite incapable of seeing the end from the beginning even if we would -- except by faith -- except as we confide in the certainty of those ends which God has revealed as the result of His moral government.
- 7. In fine [in conclusion, finally], God has purposed an end worthy of Himself -- an end which He is certain of securing. Nothing can occur to surprise Him -- nothing that He will on the whole have cause to regret. He may indeed see many things in moral agents which in

themselves are to be regretted; but He sees that He can restrain them within such limits as He judges most wise -- can say to sin and pain -- Hitherto mayest thou go, but no farther. Being able to oppose limits to the reign of sin, and also to overrule all permitted evil to secure from it results of good, He has ample reason to be satisfied with the system as He has devised it. When therefore He sees it all spread out before Him as it were on a map, He finds nothing which disturbs the deep, eternal peace of His mind.

#### **IV. The conditions of our enjoying a peace similar to that which God enjoys.**

I have said that our peace is called the peace of God, because it is like His. We too are moral agents, and are therefore in this respect like Him. Hence the conditions of peace of mind must be substantially the same in our case as in His.

- 1. It is essential that there should be internal harmony among the powers of our mind. Our sensibilities must be so subdued that all shall be in their proper place, and of the appropriate character. No one must be allowed to act in a manner inconsistent with reason. No one must be allowed to be unreasonably excessive in degree, or be misdirected as to its object. Reason and conscience must regulate the sensibility, for if the sensibility has no regulator, the mind can hope for no internal peace. Not let it be forgotten, that the divine will, if revealed, and so far as revealed, must be paramount law to us. Then our sweet and cheerful obedience to it will secure internal rest and peace.
- 2. Our peace is conditioned not only upon the fact that we are at peace with ourselves, with conscience, and with God's revealed will, but also, and especially, upon our having faith in the place which sight holds in the mind of God. God sees all things with infinitely clear and perfect vision, and therefore rests; let us believe in His wisdom and love with implicit faith, and therefore rest. He sees the end from the beginning, and of course fearing no change -- secure against all vicissitudes, He rests in peace; -- our faith should do for us what sight does for Him, and in it we too may rest. It is naturally impossible for any creature to walk by sight as God does, for the good reason that none can see as He does. Hence arises a natural necessity that faith supply in the case of all creatures what God enjoys in the omniscient grasp of His infinite mind.
- 3. Substantially the peace of all moral agents must depend upon the same conditions. But God knows by seeing; we must know by believing. If God were left in doubt as to the issues and results of things, He could not have peace of mind. Neither could we. God's mind is at rest as to the issues of all events, because He sees through all, and knows all issues with infallible certainty; we may have a similar peace, if we have such faith in His wisdom, love and power as will equally assure us of the best possible ultimate results.

Suppose you are leading a blind man. You say to him, "Now we are ascending the plank walk; we are in the right way; you need not fear." In this case you walk along confidently and fearlessly because you can see. He cannot see; but he can believe, and this may answer the same purpose. If he has faith he can move along with as much confidence, holding the hand of his trusty guide, as though he had sight itself.

God has thus put it in our power to have the same peace substantially that He has. He cannot make us see as He sees. This would imply the gift of omniscience, an attribute which we do not need -- an attribute which would be no blessing to us unless we had with it all other divine attributes -- that is, unless we were ourselves to become the infinite God. It were vain therefore for us to wish for omniscience. But we may wisely pray for faith. Faith is the very thing we need to supply for us the place which omniscience supplies to the Deity. Let God possess all the attributes of divinity, -- omniscience, omnipotence, boundless wisdom, infinite love; these attributes are all needed in the Godhead; let them exist there, and let the Infinite Mind repose in the exercise of these attributes, assured that all is infinitely well which He does, and that all will result well in the end. Thus He will have perfect peace. How can we have a similar peace? Obviously not by aspiring to have Jehovah's natural attributes, but by simple faith in Him. We do not need His attributes; they would not befit us; but we need faith; for faith befits us and our relations to God above us and to a dark and trying world around us. It is enough that one great Being should possess divine attributes; He has them; He will use them; and He has told us how He will use them. He assures us that He wields all His natural attributes in infinite love and wisdom. What could we ask more?

Since therefore His attributes create a certainty that all shall be well as He can make it, and since this certainly gives Him a deep and unalloyed peace, it follows most clearly that faith on our part should give us the same certainty and the same sort of peace. If we believe that God has framed the best possible plan and will certainly execute it in the best possible way, we shall not feel anxious for the final result. Then let us have faith in His universal providence. Let us confide in the wisdom of all He does and of all He suffers to be done. It becomes us to acquiesce in all God does whether for its own sake, or as unavoidably incidental to His best possible system; whether occurring to us or to others; whether done so that we can understand its objects and end, or done in a manner inscrutable to our imperfect vision. It is easy for us to understand that in a universe of moral agents many things will result which cannot be avoided without defeating the end. Hence we should acquiesce in the wisdom, love and resources of God. Suppose a man takes some great and important journey, for some worthy and remunerative end. He accomplishes his journey and happily secures the end he sought, but here are various incidental evils accruing. He has blistered his feet by walking, or has worn out his shoes, or he has missed his dinner once or twice on the road, or has caught a shower; but shall these light and incidental evils destroy his peace or make him regret his journey?

- 4. In like manner the incidental evils in the government of God should be patiently borne and the more so since they are not only light compared with the resulting value of the ends gained, but because infinite wisdom can overrule even these for much important good.
- 5. It is essential to our peace that we should be sure that under God all things are working out the utmost good, possible to God, and indeed, great and infinite good, absolutely. Here before you is a blind man who lives happily with his son. But suppose he had no confidence in his son at all. He is afraid as he takes his hand on a Sabbath morning to come to the house of God, that his son will pitch him off the steps. He cannot trust his wife or his daughter to prepare his food lest they should take advantage of his blindness and give him poison. How wretched he must



be!

But if he has proper confidence, he may be as quiet as to these fears, and as placid, as the best eyes could make him. How natural that he should enjoy other people's eyes, and not only be happy that they can see, but also himself enjoy the advantages of their perfect vision. He can enjoy his breakfast as well as they do. Faith makes up in many respects the place of sight.

Suppose now that we have confidence that nothing can happen which shall disturb God in any wise, or shall frustrate His plans. Suppose God has assured us that He is working all things according to the counsel of His own will; shall we not confide in His management? True He apprises us that there are some things done by moral agents, which taken by themselves and considered as their voluntary acts, He utterly abhors, as for example, their sin; yet He assures us that He can overrule it for so much good that on the whole its incidental evils in the system of a moral government do not disturb His deep, eternal peace. As in a machine there will be friction, and yet its action and results are excellent and no man need be troubled because of the incidental evil of its friction, so in the government of God. Suppose the man who invented steam engines had foreseen all their friction -- every case of bursting boilers, and all their consequences, and withal, every instance in which they should be used for evil purposes; if he should foresee these evil results and nothing else, he might be deeply troubled; but if he sees also all the resulting and far-overbalancing good, he may set his mind at rest. Much more still might he repose in peace if he had resources enough to convert even the friction to some useful end; if he could overrule every explosion of an engine to work out important good. How reasonable in this case that he should say -- "All is well; I can make all things work together for good."

- 6. So deep and blessed is the calm, eternal repose of the Infinite Mind, despite of the presence of some sin in His moral universe. His eternal gaze pierces all that can occur, or ever shall, surveying all relations and bearings and all possible results. In view of all, His peace is unalloyed. Why? Because He understands all He is doing and all the possible results. But how can His peace become available to us? We must consider what He has told us; and what is this? That all things are wrought out according to the counsel of His own will. That whatsoever He has purposed, He will assuredly perform. That not one sparrow can fall to the ground without Him. That we may confide in Him to govern all things with infinite wisdom and love. Then let us receive all He has said, and trust Him for all He is doing, and ever shall do.
- 7. But we are finite beings and are liable to get exceedingly bewildered and confounded if we lose our faith in God. You take a child into an engine room amid the noise, the crash, the dreadful displays of power, and he screams with fright; you must take him out or he will go into fits. So we are often troubled when we see a world in commotion, rocking with tempests, bleeding in war, filled with the groans occasioned by sin and by death. But why so? Does not God reign on high? Has He not told us what He is doing, and why He has framed a system of machinery to us apparently so vast and complicated, and so fraught with evil? Indeed He has told us enough for us to know. He has assured us that nothing can occur, without His intelligent and wise permission; that He is working all things according to His own most wise and

benevolent plans.

- 8. How broad and glorious is the ground laid for peace, if we will only sympathize with God and fully trust Him! What more could we possibly have?

Again, as a condition of peace we need a perfectly rectified sensibility. The fact is, that our sensibilities have been suffered so long to run riot, and have become so enormous and so unreasonable, it is impossible that we should be at peace till they are subdued. The satisfaction of perfect peace can be had in no other way.

- 9. Our will, also must be subdued till there shall be no lusting after unreasonable and forbidden objects. Its stubbornness must all give place to a deep and unresisting submission to God's will. Then our souls will be at peace.

### REMARKS.

1. God says in this text that He has called us to enjoy this state of mind. Indeed, can this be so? Has called us to enjoy what? His own eternal blessedness. He calls us to come and drink at the same eternal fountain whence flow the streams of His exhaustless felicity. Spreading out before us the infinite calm and repose of His own mind, He cries -- Ho! come, ye troubled and anxious ones; come and partake of this blessed peace. Let it rule forevermore in your hearts.

2. If God has called us to this, it is of the utmost importance that we should understand our calling. What is this to which He has called us? To let the peace of God rule in our hearts. Then let us understand what this peace of God is, and on what conditions we can secure its permanent reign in our own hearts.

3. If we are not enjoying this peace now, it is high time we should enquire why we do not. If God has called us to it, and we have not come, why have we not? Is it because we do not choose to fall in with the natural and necessary conditions? The very fact that God leaves it with our choice may occasion our loss of it. It puts it in our power to lose the blessing if we will.

If you cannot be satisfied with what God must do, you cannot be satisfied at all. God has no right to satisfy you and you have no reason to expect that He will. If you are so unreasonable as to be unwilling God should pursue His own ends by His own means, He will leave you to take care of your own peace. He will by no means turn aside from His plan for your sake. He will not make Himself unhappy because you cannot be persuaded to believe in Him, to confide in His wisdom and love, and submit yourself to His will. It would indeed please Him to make you happy; but if you will not be happy in Him, you must go your own way and provide for your own miserable happiness according to your own foolish wisdom.

4. Our peace cannot be perfect unless we ourselves are perfect.

5. To have unbroken peace, we must be physically perfect in this sense, namely, that our sensibility must be subdued so as not to be thinking and craving after impossible things, for obviously, so long as this is our physical state, it is vain for us to hope for uninterrupted peace.

6. We can see in this subject what constitutes the peace of saints on their death-bed. How often standing by the bedside of dying saints, have I philosophized on their case as I have marked their perfect peace of mind and have asked them questions to draw out their real feelings and views. I know not how often my former wife said to me on her death-bed, "My peace is perfect." She said this too with an emphasis very unusual -- an emphasis which showed me that she meant all her words implied. This led me to look at the question, -- What can be the elements of this peace?

It is plain that this peace is of no ordinary character. No desire remains unsatisfied. There is no anxiety to live and no fear to die. No passions or appetites remain to lust and crave and disquiet the mind. The soul has no unbelief; its faith is perfect. It rests in God with inexpressible composure and satisfaction. Grasping His universal providence, the mind is satisfied that God will evermore do all things well. Suppose the dying saint has children to leave behind. They are left confidently with God, in the most perfect confidence that He will take care of them and of all their interests. There remains in the mind no anxiety about the great object of the conversion of the world. This too is felt reposing on the everlasting promises, and the soul feels happy to rest the case with God.

How wonderfully deep this peace often becomes on the dying bed of God's people! It seems as if nothing could disturb it. It beams forth from their eye; it rests in placid repose on every feature; their very pulse testifies that not an anxious thought intrudes. How wonderful and how calm! Said Dr. Burritt, a pious physician, to Dr. Robbins, an infidel student of his -- "I am dying; please come and feel my pulse." The young man took his hand. Dr. Burritt said, "Can you die like that? You see all is calm and peaceful -- not one troubled thought or fear ruffles my mind or my body. Could you die so? When you shall come to die I hope you may have pulse as calm as that."

The scene affected the young doctor greatly, and became the means of his conversion. He saw that the gospel was doing for a dying saint what his infidelity could never do for him. He knew very well by the pulse of the dying Christian that there was not one agitated thought in his mind. He could not but see that the peace of God ruled in his heart, and spread its soothing influence over every object that could reach the mind.

7. With this subject before us we can understand the secret of the peace of heaven. There the mind is subdued into unalloyed and perfect peace -- a peace which rules in the heart forever. Faith in God supplies the place of omniscience, so that though they cannot know all, they can trust all in the hands of Him who does. Let come what will, therefore their peace remains undisturbed, for they believe implicitly in God, and they know that His hand is in every event that does or possibly can occur.

Suppose a mother has gone to heaven, and she does not know that her children are yet converted, or will be. But this does not disturb her perfect peace. Why can that Christian look at death approaching and not so much as wink or twinge a particle? She fears not death's bony arm; dreads not his posed and quivering dart; sees her children around her and yet is calm and undisturbed. Her calmness is not the stupor of mental imbecility, for she manifests a most wakeful concern in all that passes. Her mind was never more active and full of interest than it now is. Draw near and ask her the state of her mind. Hold your ear close down to her parched and stiffened lips, for she can scarcely articulate a word. Catch her gentle whisper -- "peace, peace" she says, "all is perfect peace." But your children; how is it

with them? Are they converted? She replies, "I have left them all with God. He has the care of my children."

Now if you can tell me the secret of the peace of the death-bed, I will tell you the secret of the peace of heaven. Or if you can tell me the secret of the peace of heaven, I can tell you the secret of the peace of the saint's dying bed. Or if you can tell me either, I can tell you the secret of all spiritual peace.

8. To those of us who have lost near and dear friends, these thoughts must be peculiarly precious. We have seen them peaceful and calm, their minds smooth as the unruffled lake -- their faith perfect and universal -- their will sunk into the will of God, and the whole mind chastened and purified. O how such a mind looks out upon the foaming ocean of events! It sees the air filled with spray, hears the thunder of the roaring billows; it sees in the distance the fearful storm, but looks out calmly from the little cleft of the rock, securely, as if there never was a storm or a billow and never could be. Not so much as the wing of the storm can touch him -- not a ripple of a wave can reach him. His soul has peace in God.

9. Many do not realize the conditions of peace of mind. They may have heard of them by the hearing of the ear, but no just impression of what they are has been made upon their minds.

10. The absence of peace of mind in any one Christian is often a great stumbling-block to others. When parents fail of possessing it, their state is often a great stumbling-block to their children. And yet they are not aware of the evil influence of their uneasy temper. In fact some seem to make a virtue of being eternally uneasy. They seem to think it becomes them to be anxious and troubled about many things. Mother, you may do more good in one single day by letting the peace of God rule in your heart, than by everything else you can do. Ah yes; let your children see your brow placid and calm; then they will see one thing in your religion attractive and not repulsive. But you may go on, bustling and fretting and talking of the wickedness of your children from morning till night, and you will only ruin them. Such influences have no natural tendency to save them. So long as your brow wears upon it storms and not sunshine, you cannot hope to win your children to embrace the gospel you profess.

11. Many seem to have so many wishes, they are likely to be damned unless God takes some strong measures with them to break up their uneasy and lusting spirit. This having an everlasting craving is entirely aside from the order of God. These lustings and cravings must be all put away, and you must learn to settle down into your own niche and be satisfied in all respects with what God does. But you cry out, "O I must have this thing, or I must have that!" You must learn to be satisfied with what God gives you and be quiet. No longer insult God by assuming that He is making mistakes in His disposal of your affairs.

12. The peace of God will rule in us in proportion to the strength of our confidence in God. It requires strong faith to see God in everything, to believe that under His hand all things are working together for good -- to know and realize that all events are pushed forward with one divine, eternal energy, and so controlled by infinite wisdom that all the wickedness of moral agents is made to work out moral good. To believe all this and live daily in the full and quiet assurance of it is no small thing.

Why does not God make Himself uneasy with the trouble and mischiefs of this crazy world? He rests

in His own eternal knowledge and power. The Christian says -- "Ah em, I don't know what is before me." But I do, says God to him -- I know all most perfectly. But says the Christian, "I cannot see anything how these matters will turn out." I can, says the Omniscient One, and you need not be anxious. Faith therefore -- faith in God is the great remedy for all this disturbance of mind. "Said I not unto thee," said Christ, "that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Then why, O Christian, wilt thou fret thyself down to the depths of hell!

## Receiving Honor from Men and Not from God

Lecture XIII

August 29, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--John 5:44: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?"

The discussion of the subject presented in these words will lead me,

*I. To show what is implied in receiving honor from men rather than from God.*

*II. To adduce the evidences of this state of mind.*

*III. To show that while this state of mind continues, faith is impossible.*

### **I. To show what is implied in receiving honor from men rather than from God.**

- 1. "Receiving" implies an act of the will. It is not therefore merely approbation. When a person constitutionally desires the approbation of his fellow-men, and this constitutional desire remains a mere feeling--an involuntary state of the sensibility, and does not lead to any acts of the will aimed towards the attainment of the object sought, no blame can attach to it. This therefore can not be what our Savior intended. He could not complain of this constitutional tendency, and therefore it can not be that He designates this in this language.
- 2. It implies a will committed to this propensity. The will is devoted to the gratification of this desire. Men seek applause from their fellow-beings, and make it an object--usually a great object, to gain the high esteem of others of their species.
- 3. This state of mind implies great spiritual blindness. Men who can prefer the honor of their

fellow men to the honor that comes from God only, must be exceedingly blind. Their minds must be in such a state that they really can see nothing relating to God and spiritual things in its true light. If they saw spiritually they would not make so unreasonable, so insane a preference. They must be stone blind to the value of God's approbation--else they could never place the approbation of man above it.

- 4. It implies unbelief. No man in the exercise of faith could receive honor from men rather than from God. If he believed what the Bible teaches of God and of spiritual things, it would be impossible for him to make such a choice.
- 5. It also implies contempt for God. No one could prefer man's approbation to God's if he did not really in heart contemn God. This state of mind practically says, Give me the esteem of my fellow-men and I am satisfied; they are of some consequence; their good opinion is worth something; but as for the honor that comes from God only--what is that to me? Why should I care for His good opinion?

Now who does not see that this is really the spirit of contemning God?

## **II. Evidences of this state of mind.**

- 1. Men are certainly in this state when they are more affected by loss of character with man than with God. This would show of course that they are more solicitous for reputation with man than with God; or which amounts to the same thing, that they love the honor that comes from man more than that which comes from God only.
- 2. Persons are in this state of mind when they more naturally inquire what man will think of them than what God will; when they are more solicitous to know the former than the latter, and are more anxious about the result. This anxiety reveals one's state of mind on the point in question beyond all doubt.
- 3. We may know ourselves to be in this state if we do or omit to do anything from regard to what man will think rather than from regard to what God will think. To be more influenced by man's opinion than by God's--by man's word than by God's word, must be taken as decisive proof of this state of mind. For example, some go to meeting more from regard to what man will think than to what God will think--more to please man than to please God. This is sometimes the case with professed Christians, and in their attendance upon the prayer meeting, as perhaps some of you can testify. Some persons abstain from labor, or from idle gossip on the Sabbath, with their eye more on man than on God. Some students get lessons more from regard to their teachers and classmates than to God. With many, how rare a thing it is to inquire--what will please my God and Father? Who does not see that such can have no faith? That remaining in this state of mind, they can not exercise faith in God.

In the same state of mind, persons will regulate their dress, their habits and manners more to please man than to please God. How much do we see of this?

- 4. Those are in this state of mind who need the impulse of approbateness to secure the

performance of that which they are under obligation to do. Suppose it be the case that regard to God is not enough to induce us to do known duty, but we need also the inducement of human praise or human esteem, what does this prove, if not that we seek the honor that comes from men and are not satisfied with that which comes from God only? When our regard for God is thus impotent as a motive to duty, it proves most conclusively that the heart is set upon the honor that comes from man.

- 5. On the same principle when we find that we need this stimulus to make us omit anything that should be omitted, we have the same praise-loving state of heart revealed. It is often the case that persons will neither do nor omit things which duty and God demand, but which public sentiment forbids. Men need the spur of public sentiment to induce action, or to dissuade from action as the case may be; which shows an exceedingly corrupt state of mind--one over which God has no practical sway whatever.
- 6. Another proof of this state of mind is, that persons are deeply affected either by the applause or the censure of men. Paul could say--"It is a small thing for me to be judged by man's judgment;"--so all-controlling was his regard for God's judgment, it left small scope for the influence of man's judgment. In fact who does not see that in the nature of the case it is of comparatively small account either way, whether man approves or disapproves; and a man who had proper faith in God and in spiritual things can never be greatly affected one way or the other by man's opinions. He will make this his main inquiry--Will this course please God? Who of you that have known by experience what it is to be drawn into deep communion with God, has not felt most impressively that the opinions of man are light as a feather? You have been lifted entirely above being affected by the applause or the frowns of men.
- 7. Decisive proof of the state condemned in our text is afforded when we suffer either the private judgment or public sentiment of men to restrain us from obeying God. In such case we may know that our regard for God is not supreme, and that it is impossible we should have faith.
- 8. Equally so when we conform outwardly to those duties which are popular with men, and neglect those which are not enforced by public sentiment. Often men will be punctual in duties sustained by public sentiment, but negligent in duties not thus sustained. For example, a man will violate the Sabbath in private, by reading books which he knows are unsuitable for that day, or in conversation which disqualifies the mind for the worship of God, when still he would by no means go abroad on the Sabbath, or in any way be known publicly as disregarding its sacred claims. Many will write such letters on the Sabbath as they would not have it known were written on that day, and many letters written on the Sabbath are dated either Saturday or on Monday. They are not ashamed to have God know their sins--only let it be hid from human view.
- 9. We evince the same state of mind if we refuse to avow ourselves the friends of God because such avowal would be unpopular with men. Persons may be in such circumstances that to avoid odium they will conceal the fact of their being professors of religion, or the fact of their holding some sentiments not generally popular; and this they do because they are far more afraid of

injuring their popularity with men than with God. How wrong! How deeply corrupt before God must such a heart be!

- 10. We evince the same spirit whenever we seek to connect ourselves with those families, churches, societies, or institutions which will increase our popularity with men and not with God. For example, in cities, on this principle men will go to the most popular churches. Students will go to the most popular institutions, and in both cases the question is not--Which course will most please God?--but, which will be the most popular with men? In the same way, men will seek to form connections with families so as to augment their popularity with men, not their acceptance with God.

On the same principle men will avoid connections and associations which will only raise them in God's esteem, and not in man's. Suppose God is building up a church and men are afraid to join it because it is unpopular. If you understand the case as it is, and choose to avoid unpopularity among men rather than incur odium and reproach for Christ's sake, how clearly do you show what spirit you are of? I knew the case of a man of a very aristocratic spirit, a member of the Presbyterian church, who became ultimately converted, and his conversion was a real turning. He came square round; would go to church among the poor, among the people of color, among the most despised classes of society, and among those only. He said to me, "Going among these classes I feel a great deal more in my place, and my worship of God is far sweeter to me there. It is my very life to go and try to elevate those classes. I love to help them--to encourage them and give them all the countenance and sympathy I can. I love to go, said he, to that colored congregation; there is a blessed revival among them, and there I find men looking in the simplicity of their hearts for the approbation of God. There is none of that stiffness there which encumbers me among the aristocrats of the city."

- 11. We show the same spirit when we have more regard to outward appearance than to the state of our hearts before God. Take for example, any person in this house who has more regard to outward appearance before men than to inward appearance before God. You have taken more pains in your morning preparation to commend yourself outwardly to men than inwardly to God; have spent more time before your mirror than on your knees; have looked more carefully to your person and your dress than to your heart; ah, you come into God's house as a mocker, to insult God! You profess to worship Him, but in heart you worship the congregation, or perhaps, yourself! And must not this be an abomination to God?
- 12. Again, when persons have more regard to their manner and behavior in the sight of God, and the question with them is--not, what will God think of us, but what will men think? then all is corrupt in heart.
- 13. Also when men allow themselves to practice any secret sin which they would be ashamed to practice before men, they reveal their own hearts as loving the praise and fearing the censure of man more than God.
- 14. Again, if we do not sooner blush and hang our heads to find our hearts impure before God than we should to appear in the most disgusting exposure before men, we show that we have



more regard to man's esteem than to God's. If we can be ashamed of anything which men disapprove, but can be backslidden before God and not be ashamed of it, we are certainly in a state in which we can not be saved.

- 15. When we feel the necessity of human applause to prompt us to the performance of any duty; as for example, if a wife needs the stimulus of a husband's applause to prevent her from neglecting her duties; or the husband needs his wife's applause to quicken him in his duties; or when a student needs the impulse of his teacher's praise to make him study, or the stimulus of commencement and of college honors to crowd him along so as to make even commendable progress; these cases and such as these evince that man's esteem is held before God's. When such stimuli are needed to induce proper application to study, all is wrong. When men need these or similar appliances to induce right action, where are they? What state of mind are they in?
- 16. When it is natural for us to conceive of action produced by such motives as right, we show ourselves to have entirely false views of the real nature of right and wrong. In fact if we can look upon such a state of mind otherwise than with loathing, we show that our hearts are far indeed from estimating things by the right standard. Suppose a student should come to me and I should see that he must have my applause or he would not study, could I regard him as a Christian? While I see that these are the considerations and appliances needed to prompt him along, and that he is influenced by applause only, can I have confidence in his piety? Can he afford me any evidence that his heart is with God? Must I not disapprove, nay, even loathe his spirit?
- 17. So if we are in a state of mind in which we can think of securing any real good to others by such appliances; if we can suppose that by such a course we can either promote their piety or their real usefulness, we are ourselves entirely out of the way. Nothing could show more conclusively that we have missed the true idea of supreme regard for God.

### **III. While this state of mind continues faith is impossible.**

- 1. This is asserted in the text. The question of our Savior implies the strongest form of negation. He could not more pointedly have said--It is impossible for you who receive honor one of another to have faith.
- 2. The state of mind implied in our text is the very opposite of faith. Faith commits the will to God and implies a supreme regard to God's views, opinions and applause. Of course it is as widely contrasted with the state of receiving honor from men rather than from God, as it can be.
- 3. The state of mind here described is a committal to gratify a propensity and must therefore be a state of total depravity. What less can you say of the man who prefers honor from men to honor from God?
- 4. It is therefore naturally impossible to believe, and yet indulge in this state of mind. The state which prefers human applause and the state of the true believer are fundamentally opposed to each other and can never co-exist in the same mind. There is therefore ample ground in the very

constitution and nature of things for the strong negation implied in the question put by our Lord--"How can ye believe who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that comes from God only?"

## REMARKS.

1. This is one of the most common forms of total depravity. This giving up the mind to be influenced more by man than by God--more by man's opinions than by God's, is exceedingly common and the propensity to it seems to be amazingly strong. Therefore this propensity, more than any other, takes the control of the will. Hence few things will excite more pain or more pleasure than those which affect reputation. How many a young woman--professed Christians too--would almost go deranged if she supposed her reputation were suffering, and yet she cares not for God's disapprobation! How many young men would almost die if they felt themselves disgraced; if they saw themselves expelled from the Institution; while yet they are very little, if at all affected by God's known displeasure! O what a state of mind is this!
2. Yet this state of mind is often regarded as scarcely one of depravity at all. So far from being thought to be total depravity, it is by many scarcely deemed a sin. Men will show by their language and conduct that they have more respect for the esteem of men than of God, and yet they think this quite consistent with a profession of religion. This is in their view altogether a venial fault if indeed it be a fault at all. They would be astounded if you were to assure them that such a state of mind disproves Christian character. They have never dreamed any such thing.
3. Multitudes who profess religion are totally blind in this matter. Some are given up to one form of self-seeking and some to another; but almost none of them attribute this to total depravity. Are they not totally blind in these things? How can men be religious while their will is given up to selfishness? Surely this state is precisely the opposite of religion.
4. How few know what it is to renounce the world in the sense of renouncing all undue regard to its opinions and its honors, and giving themselves wholly to God. We sometimes see a case of this sort in which a Christian does really break the yoke of sin and selfishness--but how rare! Yet in no other cases have we the proof that persons are truly religious.
5. Many of the most endearing and important relations of life are perverted by selfishness and thus become a snare to souls. For example, the marriage relation. Many women feel worse to lose the affections of their husband than to lose the love of God. They will wander far, very far away from God, and incur His certain and sore displeasure; yet it gives them scarcely the least possible anxiety or pain; but these same persons at the same time may be tremblingly alive to the opinions of their husbands! Oh, if they could only please their husbands? But you see no manifestations of strong desire to please God.

The same thing is often true of husbands towards their wives. So in all the various relations of life. They are abused and perverted by the selfishness of men. Designed by our Creator for our social happiness, they are so perverted as to become a great temptation to idolatrous affection and regard; then of course, God is disesteemed and forgotten, and the most fatal effects of human depravity are the natural results.

I have often thought that we as a people in this place have greatly erred in the way of too much regard to men's opinions. We began here a small and unknown people. No sooner did we become in some measure known than our names began to cast out as evil. There were many reasons why we should be opposed, some of which were to us unavoidable. But into this subject I need not now enter. I cannot however forbear to remark that there has been a manifest desire here for a long time past to conform so far to the course of other institutions as to get back to popular favor. It cannot be denied that there has been such a desire manifested here, nor that it has been somewhat general. There has been a tendency to turn and tack, and haul up to the wind of popular favor so as to avoid being reproached by those whom we cannot regard as being God's people and in sympathy with God. Now so far as we would do this, we are backsliders from God--real apostates from the God we have professed to love and obey. We ought to know and consider that the world is no more friendly to God than it used to be. In this world, said Christ to His real disciples, ye shall have tribulation. If we will be His unswerving disciples and followers, we have no more right to expect that we can escape public odium than that Christ could.

I am not now saying that we should excite public odium causelessly, or recklessly; but we should seek God's approbation supremely, and then leave all results to His over-ruling providence.

6. In the light of our subject we see the great secret of the loss of piety among students. It is a notorious fact that students, instead of rising are apt to degenerate in their piety. I know there are exceptions, but they are only exceptions, and solitary ones too. James B. Taylor was one, and for this reason he was the butt of ridicule in his class. Just because he sustained and developed his piety, was he unpopular with his class-mates--though far indeed from being unpopular with God.

How shall we account for this fact of general declension in the piety of students? We cannot ascribe it to the nature of their studies. It cannot lie either in the mental exercise and discipline itself, nor in the kind of studies pursued usually in college. It must therefore lie in the motives under which study is pursued. The fearful fact is--students become ambitious. They have their eye on college honors; indeed not only their eye, but their earnest heart. To deny this were to deny one of the plainest matters of fact. Who does not know that they often manifest this to an odious extent? There may be more or less of the appearance of piety manifested in various ways along with this strong manifestation of ambition, but what then? How can ambition and pure religion come into sympathy and union with each other? If those students were to study nothing but the Bible, and yet do this for the sake of making a great commencement speech to show themselves off superbly, who does not see that there would be no piety at all in this? Suppose they studied Hebrew or Theology for such an end, could you say they had profited much by those studies, pursued for such objects?

7. This same form of ambition is the ruin of many ministers. They get this spirit in college, carry it into the Theological Seminary, and out of the Seminary into their pulpit, and so on perhaps through life. And who does not know that an ambitious minister is the next-door neighbor to the devil? Who in all the earth does more of Satan's work than he, or does it up to better advantage for his employer?

Now why should not an ambitious life be the result of such a course of training through the college and through the seminary? Why should not such causes produce such results? Is it strange?

I do not by any means say that college honors were intended for this end, but I do say that these are the results naturally, usually, and most deplorably. No wonder these results should distress the truly spiritual portion of the church, and grieve the intelligent and pious patrons of literary institutions. I have good reason to know that they do. I can see why they should.

8. Everybody feels that it is a dreadful sin for a minister to seek applause. Who does not feel this? Who does not know that he should himself oppose a minister whom he had reason to believe ambitious? You see a man evidently preaching from ambitious motives, seeking honor from men more than from God; you mark him, and notice how his ambition works itself out everywhere--in the shape of his sermon, in his manner in the pulpit, and his manner out of the pulpit; in his remarks about himself and his inquires after praise;--seeing this and such things as these, you would cry out against him--Hypocrite! wretch! how can you desecrate God's sanctuary and altar by such a heart as yours!

But thou that condemnest another, beware lest thou also condemn thyself. Seeking honor from man more than from God is just as bad in other men as in gospel ministers:--is just as wicked in other employments as in the gospel ministry. A man in any sphere who allows himself to do the same things is just as odious to God as the minister is, and so would be the woman also who should do the same, and possess the same spirit.

9. Many persons at great pains educate their children more for the sake of elevating them in the world than for raising them in the esteem and favor of God. Many educate themselves for the same end, on the same principles. How dreadful that persons should educate either themselves or their children for sin and for moral ruin.

10. As long as young men study ambitiously, we need not expect a thoroughly consecrated, self-denying, and God-honoring ministry. Education has too much power to admit of results so unlike its own tendencies. Train your men ambitiously during their years of study, and you can expect nothing better than an ambitious life.

11. Students so trained, come gradually to lose a sense of the wickedness of this state of mind. They cease to realize how wicked it is to be more influenced by man than by God. They come gradually under this influence; but when once it has gained the ascendancy in their hearts, they carry it with them to the last moment of commencement day; then they go right off with it to some theological seminary, and perhaps will select their seminary with special reference to their own ambitious ends, preferring that which will give them most \_\_\_\_\_. No wonder this spirit of ambition follows them from the seminary into the ministry, and through their ministry to their very grave!

12. When a student is seen to be in such a state, instructors ought to have their eye on him, and ought to bring influences to bear upon him to save him if possible before the strength of habit becomes too strong to be overcome--too rigid to be cured. Especially should councils and all bodies which exercise the function of granting license to preach, be peculiarly watchful if called to examine for licensure a candidate who is manifestly ambitious. No such candidate ought ever to be admitted into the ministry--no, never! Their influence in it cannot fail of being fearfully pernicious.

13. A great many persons it is to be feared are keeping up the form of religion before men, while they know themselves to have no communion with God. They may attend worship in their families--but to be seen of men rather than to be accepted of God. They go through the forms of Sabbath worship--their eye on man and not towards God. If they are unblemished in their moral life, it is from regard to their own reputation, lest they should incur the censure of the church and be seen to be really wicked before men. Perhaps they will even pray in public for the sake of their reputation among men, while they know that God regards it as an abomination. Ah, sometimes such men go and pray when the very midnight of the pit is not blacker than their hearts! Horrible!

You can easily see why so many complain of coldness and unbelief. No wonder there is unbelief in your hearts. "How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" While you turn your back upon God, how can you expect anything better than that He will turn His face away from you? Could you even respect Him if He did not manifest self-respect enough to do this?

O then, cease ye from man! Cease to regard man as one whose opinions should affect you, and control your conduct or your heart. O how many are in bondage to public sentiment--a bondage fatal to their peace with God--fatal to their exercising faith in God--fatal--alas! in multitudes of cases to the final salvation of their souls!

## **Faith the Work of God**

Lecture XIV

October 10, 1849

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--John 6:28-29: "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

In the preceding context Jesus rebukes the people for following Him, not because they saw his miracles, and in his miracles the proof that He came from God, but for the sake of the loaves and fishes; and then takes occasion to exhort them to "labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." Upon this they start up with the question--What is this "labor" of which you speak? What shall we do to secure this everlasting life?

To this Jesus answers in our text--"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

In discussing the subject here presented, I shall

*I. Notice the difference between the letter and the spirit of a commandment.*

*II. Show what is not the work which God really requires.*

*III. What it is.*

*IV. What is implied in it.*

*V. Notice some delusions into which persons fall on this subject.*

### **I. Notice the difference between the letter and the spirit of a commandment.**

The letter respects the outward doing--the executive act, or as sometimes called, the proximate act, (as being the last in the series,) as distinguished from the ultimate end or intention which in the order of nature comes first in the series.

For example, in the act of going to meeting; the mere external act of going is the last or proximate act, and may be obedience to the simple letter of the precept. If all is right, the proximate end may be to join in the singing, the prayer, or to participate in the instructions of the sanctuary; but the ultimate end will be to worship and glorify God. The letter of a precept says--Do this--Abstain from that; and yet every one knows that all acts do in fact proceed from some ultimate end to which the spirit of the precept refers. In the case of going to church, the letter of the precept respects only the outward going, and of course the outward going fulfills the letter of the precept. But the precept has also a spirit, and this refers to the ultimate intention of the act, and requires that this shall be right before God.

This distinction is not only a very plain one, but in morals it is altogether fundamental. An act shall have a bad character, a good character, or none at all, according to its ultimate moral quality. For example: giving to the poor may result from a great variety of motives, and its real character can be determined only from its ultimate end.

God, therefore, not only requires the outward doing, but much more, and above all, the motives; so that a man would obey who had a right spirit even if prevented from the outward act. For example, the precepts requiring attendance on public worship and giving to the poor, would be obeyed in the mere intention, provided circumstances were such as absolutely to forbid the outward act. Yet it should not be forgotten that if the outward act is possible, the sincere intention will always require and secure it. Still it is true that if the intention exists, the deed, so far forth as its morality is concerned is actually done, If the intention be wrong, the command is disobeyed; if right, it is obeyed, whether the man is able to carry it out in external action or not. If the intention be not right, there is no obedience, how much-so-ever the letter may be observed.

### **II. What is not the work of God. That is--What does not constitute that obedience which is acceptable to God?**

- 1. It is not compliance with the mere letter of any precept whatever. So far as the executive acts of the will are concerned, none of these are the work which God requires.
- 2. It is not doing any thing whatever with ultimate reference to please ourselves, or promoting our own self-interest. In other words, it is not any action determined by hope of personal good, or fear of personal evil. This can be no more doing God's work than a hired man would do his employer's work who should be purely selfish and aim to please himself only, instead of pleasing his employer. If he feels no interest in his work for his employer's sake, and is interested only to serve himself, his hands may turn off a little business in a poor way for his master; but where no heart is, there is no valuable service.

So, and much more, in religion. Unless a man goes out of himself for his end, he is really serving himself, and not God. Suppose he prays, or preaches, or goes to meeting; if his ultimate object be to secure some good to himself, he is not doing the Lord's work, but only his own. He is as really doing his own work as he who goes to California to dig for gold in its mines. The moral difference does not lie in the business done, but in the spirit of the act. One goes with a spade and mattock to dig for gold--all for himself alone;--another goes to his closet or to church to do his religious services, and to work out his own salvation. If the latter be done as really for self as the other, and as truly without an ultimate regard to the will and glory of God, it is no more acceptable to God than the former. No matter what the course of life is, if self and self only be the end.

- 3. It is nothing done in obedience to custom. It is astonishing to see how much is done for no other reason than that the church does so. The usages and customs of the church are held and deemed as law. But obedience to this law is not the work of God to which our text alludes.
- 4. No obedience whatever to public sentiment is real religion. It is wonderful to see how much that passes for religion is done from regard to public sentiment. In places where the standard of piety as determined by public sentiment is very low, you will scarcely distinguish this class of persons from the most worldly men. But transfer them to other circumstances and relations where public sentiment requires much of them, and you will see their lives greatly modified. They will become very strict in their religious duties, and very careful to meet all the claims which the current public sentiment makes upon them.

It is not strange that in some situations these persons should seem to be very religious. Since I have lived in Oberlin I have conversed with hundreds who have told me how much their religious life had improved since they have been here. But this change may have been simply the result of external circumstances--no principle at bottom controlling their conduct except a regard to public opinion. Such persons are greatly in danger of misjudging their own character, and of becoming very self-complacent in the idea of their making great progress in holiness, while really they ought only to condemn themselves for being under the control of public sentiment rather than of faith working by love.

- 5. Nothing done in obedience to the commandments of men is doing the work of God. Human laws are well--in civil governments, in the school and in the family; but to suppose that obeying them is doing our whole duty to God is a great mistake. It is a part of our duty to God, no doubt,

but it is not the great thing which God requires. And when regard to human authority is the ultimate motive, and we go no farther than this, then plainly we render obedience simply to parents, and not to God--that is, if in this very obedience they have no regard at all to God, they render Him no obedience at all. To do so is not "obeying parents in the Lord."

- 6. Nothing done from sheer superstition. This is most obvious. If I had time I should like to point out various things done here which are real superstitions. Superstitions are not restricted to the Roman Catholics. They come down among Protestants also, in the form of traditions of the elders, with which persons are exceedingly careful to comply, and thus think to work out great and important righteousness.
- 7. Nothing done from a mere sense of duty, without faith or love. Every mere legalist knows what it is to do things from a mere sense of duty. In fact nothing is more common than for persons to act on this principle. They meet a demand of conscience, and conscience in some persons seems to be developed only in certain directions and in reference to certain things. Usually men who say they act from conscience have reference only to external acts. They say it is right for me to do thus and thus towards my neighbor; but in this they think only of the external act, not of the internal motive.

But listen to that man who acts from a mere sense of duty: "I have been to meeting twice today. I went because I thought it to be my duty." You did, indeed! And is this the spirit of God's requirements? Where is the faith and love of the gospel in this act! It is not there. There is not a particle of evangelical obedience in such doings. No man ever assigns as a reason for true love to God--I did it because I thought it was my duty! To be sure, a man who does right from love to God is conscious of conforming to his conscience; but he does not act because he is lashed up to duty by a scourge he dare not resist and can not endure.

- 8. No mere doing, whatever, without respect to the ultimate end, is obedience.
- 9. Nothing done to obtain a hope, or to support or revive an old hope, is doing the work of God. Many toil earnestly for these ends, but toil to no good purpose.
- 10. Nothing done to obtain comfort is real religion. If they had hope of success, they might toil and labor for this event in hell. The rich man praying for a drop of water to cool his tongue, might as well flatter himself that he is thereby doing the work of God, as they. How vain for persons to suppose that their labors to obtain rest of mind are really the work of God, unless those labors take the direction of faith and love. Intuitively the soul cries out,

"O where shall rest be found,

Rest for the weary soul."

Yet there is the utmost danger lest men seek it as an ultimate end, and otherwise than in the way of God. Men need a monitor to follow them about, crying evermore in their ears--Brother, sister, that is not the work of God. What, you say, perhaps,--what! does not



God require me to pray? Yes; but with faith, not without faith. Does not God require me to give to the poor? Yes; but not without faith and love. O, how some men need an angel at their elbow continually to keep them from falling into the pit--they are so prone to make mistakes. Many need to be warned most earnestly and made to see that their great efforts to obtain exemption from agonies of mind, conviction and distress, are not really the work of God.

Indeed, no matter what the effort may be, though made in ever so exact conformity to the letter, yet it is not acceptable obedience unless made in faith. Nothing whatever which is not faith and love, or the spontaneous results of these exercises, can be deemed real obedience to God. This is most manifest, and needs to be thoroughly understood.

### III. What is the work of God?

- 1. The text embraces all in a word--FAITH.

When Christ's hearers made this enquiry in our text, they had reference merely to executive or outward acts. They had fallen entirely from the spiritual apprehension of God's commands, and supposed their requisitions to lie merely in the external act. They understood God as requiring a mere external course of life. Christ, therefore, understood them as enquiring--Shall we sacrifice? Shall we give alms to the poor? Shall we make many offerings at the temple?

Christ understood their enquiry, and saw that they fell exceedingly short of the truth; therefore He for the time being left out of view, utterly and purposely, all which they called works. No doubt they esteemed this a most marvelous answer. To them his answer must have seemed equivalent to this: Do not anything at all. You ask, says Christ, what acts you shall do that you may work the works of God. I see that you have infinitely misapprehended the case. This is the work--that you believe God--exercise faith. "Faith? what is that?" they answer. "Do tell us what we shall DO!" Do none of those things which you have in your minds.

Yet we are not to suppose that Christ forbade the doing of any right external acts. He knew perfectly well as we also do, that if the heart could be got into the right state, all would be well. He therefore aimed at one blow to cut them square off from all their vain dependencies. "Do none of those things," said He, "as THE work of God; but believe." Suppose that they had replied, "We do believe already." Many hundreds have said so to me who yet were in a state similar to that of those Jews. We certainly believe, say they; and there is a sense in which they do; but it is not any such sense as involves obedience and love. It is only a purely intellectual assent to the truth; but this is not gospel faith.

- 2. Our text raises the great enquiry--What is the condition of salvation?

You will observe that we are not now enquiring into the grounds, but simply the conditions of salvation. Christ did not intend to teach that faith can be the meritorious ground of salvation; but simply that without which men can not be saved.

It is remarkable that Christ speaks as if faith comprehended all God's requirements. Obviously it is here spoken of just as love is where it is said to be the fulfilling of the law. In real love, we really fulfill the whole law; because love is connected with the whole circle of obedient activities and should be the moving spring of all our external actions. Faith sustains the same relations to all our activities that love does.

- 3. But what is this faith which is the work of God?

I answer,

- (1.) It is not a merely intellectual conviction. It is not opinion, or any set of opinions. It is not a mere speculation; nor a system of theology, however firmly or intelligently held; it is no merely intellectual state of mind.
- (2.) But it is trust or confidence in the character of God. There can be no such thing as a rational belief of what God says, only as we believe him to be trustworthy. We never have confidence in the declarations of any being only as we pre-suppose confidence in his character. In faith therefore, we voluntarily cast ourselves upon and confide in the truthfulness, wisdom, love and power of God. Confidence in God is the same sort of thing as confidence in man. In exercising confidence in man, we really repose in the character of those whom we trust. Take for example the case of a student. He has no means of support. It is but natural, therefore, that he should be anxious, restive, and distressed lest he shall be obliged soon to abandon the pursuit of an education. To all human probability he must soon turn away from his books and his studies, and seek some means of livelihood in other pursuits. But tomorrow the mail brings him a letter from a friend--a man of great generosity, integrity and wealth. His letter says--"I have heard of your case, of your anxieties, of your embarrassments, and of your strong desire to go on with your education. It gives me pleasure to say to you that you may draw on me at sight for any amount you need."

Now suppose the student does not believe this--suppose he lacks confidence in the writer. O, he says, this looks very fair, but I am afraid he will fail in his business, or at least that he will change his mind. I don't believe I can rely on his promise. Now in this state of mind, he will not be at rest. Perhaps he will be as anxious as ever. But on the other hand, if he believes, he will be at rest. If he has all confidence in the character of his friend, he will feel as calm as evening. He can sleep as quietly as a babe. No longer will he let his bosom burn up with intense, wasting anxieties

So of all confidence in God's wisdom and power.

If any of you have ever been at sea in a fierce and dreadful storm, when every wave broke over you, every plank creaked as if it must be wretched asunder, you know how anxiously you looked at the captain--how you watched his countenance, and studied especially his confidence in his ship

and in her capacity to weather the storm--and you noticed with what composure he saw his masts twisted almost double and bent up like withes, yet breaking not; then you had an illustration of faith. You trusted in the captain's judgment and skill; he trusted in the seaworthiness of his ship and in his own experience.

So of faith in God. You want faith that God loves both yourself and everybody else; for if you believed that He loves you, and yet did not believe that He loves everybody else, you might have trouble. So if you admit that He loves others but not yourself, you will find that more faith than this is needful before you can have universal peace.

You know how the little child feels towards his father. You may have an axe in your hand, or a sword;--the child is not afraid, for he knows you are a father. He will seize hold of it and play with it as with a feather, for he can not dream of danger or fear, so long as the instrument is in his father's hand. He believes that you love him; and knows that you will not hurt him, so that even a sword in your hand awakens no fear in his bosom.

So of God. You are no more afraid when God plays with the forked lightning than when he paints his bow on the vaulted sky in the stillness of approaching sunset. This is faith. It trusts God amid the storm as in the calm, assured that He is forevermore the same and always infinitely good and wise.

But you are sick;--yes, you are sick. What then? Suppose your mother could save your life and restore your health at any moment. You would feel very calm;--and why? Because you have so much confidence in her love. Ah, but you say--I have confidence in God's love; but perhaps God does not see it best to save my life. So your mother might not see it best to save your life; and if she were as good as God is, and as wise, she would do the very same thing. You may therefore now be just as peaceful as if your destiny lay in the hands of the kindest and wisest earthly parent, for you may know that you shall live or die just as infinite Love and Wisdom shall appoint.

Christ tasted death for every man;--consequently for both you and me. Now the faith that God requires involves the full belief of this. Faith includes the confidence that Christ is ready, able and willing to save you. Suppose you are in the deep waters, and you seem just ready to sink--when suddenly you see a man just by, and you know that he is both ready, able and willing to save you. The fact that you believe this fully will make you quiet under any circumstances of danger. This confidence will make you as calm as if your feet were already on a rock.

- o (3.) Faith implies that you trust in Christ as sustaining to yourself all his revealed relations--as being of God made unto you wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. You trust in the present sufficiency and fulness of his grace. You know it is

adequate to meet and supply every want, and it is ready and at hand now. You see and believe that He can do for you all you need.

- o (4.) You also see in Christ provision made for all the future, so that you have no more occasion to be anxious for the future than for the present. In fact you believe in all his promises--taking every word of them as addressed to yourself, and as good for your present use. You yield yourself up to his providence, assured that he pledges himself to make all things work together for good to his people. To his disposal, therefore, you yield up yourself entirely and most quietly for time and for eternity. You know you can trust his wisdom, and you can cheerfully commit yourself to his safe conduct and preservation.

Some of you have seen the power of this faith illustrated in the dying saints of God. In talking with them you found it impossible to name a thing which gave them any anxiety. "God," said they, "will keep all in his hand of love." You speak to that dying wife and mother;--"are you going to leave your husband? How can you bear to go?" God will take care of him. "But how can you leave all your children?" God will take care of them. "But your youngest one--that dear feeble thing?" God will take care of that. "Are you not afraid that you may die under a cloud?" God will take care of that. "But you may dishonor God, and may sin against his name in the last struggles?" Aye, God knows how to take care against that. This is the universal answer. Everything is committed to God.

Press this dying mother yet farther. Say--you are to leave your children in a wicked world--a world full of temptations and snares. Your husband may marry badly and your children may suffer for want of a mother's sympathy; you know not how many dangers and evils may befall them. What does she reply? God, she says, will take care of that. This is the antidote for all cares and anxieties. God's immutable character and promises are a great sheet anchor to her soul. Stayed upon them, she is not afraid to leap over hell itself--making the entire sweep over its burning crater.

This faith is no visionary thing--no mere speculation. Nothing has ever been more abundantly attested by living and competent witnesses.

But go to the speculative believer. There he lies, on his dying bed. "Are you near your end?" No doubt I am. "Have you any anxieties?" O yes, anxieties enough. I am afraid about my children, my wife, my property--a thousand things.

Now all this fear and anxiety is real unbelief.

#### **IV. Several things implied in doing the works of God.**

- 1. Having the same end with Him. You must sympathize with God in the great end He pursued. This sympathy will be a natural result of really loving Him. When in the spirit of real love you

come to confide in his universal goodness, love and faithfulness, you can not fail to have a universal sympathy with Him in respect to all his course in his government.

- 2. Spontaneous obedience to the letter of his commands. I have already said that faith and love are connected naturally with the corresponding outward acts; hence the obedience of faith is perfectly spontaneous. How is it with the confiding wife? She has a perfect sympathy with her husband in respect to his ends and motives. Suppose that with a common object they set off upon a journey to realize this object. The wife knows perfectly that her husband understands best how to accomplish this end. Consequently she needs no command; she needs only an expression of his will, for the simple reason that she sympathizes with him in the common object and confides in his wisdom to effect it.

So in regard to God. When you have perfect confidence in his character and sympathy with his ends, you will need only to know his will and obedience will not be forced, but entirely spontaneous, not less so with you than with an angel, so far as you have real faith in God.

- 3. Absence of all fear that hath torment. You see this beautifully exemplified in the case of many saints on their death-beds, when you cannot name a thing which they do not cheerfully and sweetly commit to God, so as to have no anxieties remaining on their minds.
- 4. Dominion of the peace of God in the soul. This is the inevitable result of faith. God's faith in Himself, (if I may thus speak,) is the ground of his own peace. He has perfect confidence in his own integrity, and in all his attributes, both moral and physical. Having devoted these attributes to the great work of doing good with the assurance of success, He cannot fail of enjoying perfect peace of mind. Now let a Christian believe what God believes, and he will have the very peace which God has. God does not tremble through fear of the future, neither will he.
- 5. Calmness and equanimity of soul. By this I do not mean that there will not be inequalities in the state of the sensibility; there were in Christ Himself. Yet will the depths of the soul be calm, for the elements of calmness and equanimity are naturally there.
- 6. Satisfaction with present allotments of providence. Whether sick or health be your lot, all is well, all comes, you plainly see, from God, and you trust Him to do all things in the best possible manner.
- 7. A quiet state of mind in respect to all the future. All ignorant of the future though he be, yet the believer is at rest about it, and does not wish to cathechise the Omniscient One as if he could not wait for time to reveal coming events. He does not say--O that God would let me turn over the leaves of the future--that I might turn over the leaf of tomorrow today; it is enough to know that as the present, so all the future is in the hands of God, who evermore doeth all things well.
- 8. Divine cheerfulness of temper. This is the natural and inevitable result of faith, even as sourness and moroseness of temper are of unbelief. Before my conversion I could realize that if I had universal confidence in the present agency, wisdom and goodness of God, it could not fail

to make me calm and cheerful under all circumstances. I saw that Christians were the only persons who had any right to be cheerful.

- 9. Universal sympathy with goodness.
- 10. Universal opposition to all evil.
- 11. What are called religious duties are spontaneities; as really so as the affection and the duties of a mother towards her offspring. She sits among her children, in the midst of love--never so much in her element as when she is catching their smiles and responding with her own. Are not her maternal duties and affections the spontaneities of the heart? Even so, are the Christian's when faith works by love and purifies the heart.

#### **V. Delusions incident to this subject.**

- 1. Many look only to the letter. They have substantially the Jewish notions of religion. All they think of is, doing, doing, without ever falling back upon faith as the main-spring of all.
- 2. The conscience of many is developed only in respect to the letter. They seem never to have developed their conscience in respect to anything beyond the outward moralities of religion. What a delusion is this! To have a conscience only in respect to the outward life, but one which will not convict of wrong in respect to faith--how wide is this from the doctrine of Christ! He said of the Holy Spirit--when He shall come, "He will reprove of sin, because they believe not on me." Did Christ say--He will reprove the world for not fasting twice in a week--for not giving tithes of all one's mint, anise and cummin--for lying, for licentiousness? Nay, verily; but for not believing on Him. Christ seemed to have their state perfectly before his mind, and therefore said, the Spirit, coming, should teach them a better lesson than to fast and to make long prayers in the street-corners to be seen of men; he would teach them the sin of unbelief.

How remarkable that men should have such a conscience! A conscience not developed at all toward the real things of religion; but all their ideas of right and wrong relate to matters in which there is not a particle of right and wrong whatever! Shall I call this a conscience? It is not worthy of the name; yet it may answer my present purpose to use the name, for this thing of which I speak supplies to them the place and executes the functions that conscience ought to fill and execute. The delusion often remains unshaken even to death, that religion refers to nothing more or other than to the outward life. For instance, a woman is absent from prayer-meeting because her children are sick, and her conscience is exceedingly troubled. What ails that woman? O she has committed so great a sin! Does she not know that she may have committed more sin in her unbelief than she ever could commit under any circumstances in being absent from prayer-meeting?

An occurrence in my own personal history made impressions on my mind of the sin of unbelief which I can never forget. A friend of mine had manifested so great a regard to my personal wants, and so strong a determination to supply them, that when I came to notice its effect on my own feelings towards him, it struck me forcibly that I had not so much confidence after all in God as I had in that man. This thought came like a wave of

death over my soul. Is it possible, said I, that after all the revelations God has made of his love to me, I have not trusted Him so much as I trust one of my fellow-mortals? And shall God never be able to gain my confidence? Shall my unbelief forever grieve his heart and bar me from his bosom?

This train of thought served to show me the greatness of my own sins of unbelief.

- 3. Many judge themselves more by their outward life than by their faith. They know very well that their faith does not correspond with the claims of God upon them; so they are averse to looking at that point. But their outward life comes nearer their own ideal. So with great pleasure they search that for some favorable testimony to support their hope.
- 4. Many compel themselves to obey the letter, and then satisfy themselves with this as if they had now done all their duty. What a mistake!
- 5. Many persons, becoming somewhat convicted, begin to feel dissatisfied with themselves, and then set themselves about right doing and right feelings, instead of believing. Some one says to them--Go and visit, and labor and pray for souls. Then you will get joy and peace. So they rush upon outward doings for relief and for rest of mind. Christ would say to such--Would you know what to do that you may work the work of God? This is the work of God--that you believe. But you say--"I do believe." What do you believe? And do you believe with all your heart? Do you heartily embrace the real gospel and the whole gospel?
- 6. Others mistake conviction for faith. They think that views of truth are really the same thing as faith. Whereas, one may have strong convictions of truth, and yet be very far from yielding up the heart to the proper dominion of that truth.
- 7. Others resort to works to get faith. Yes, they go into a perfect effervescence of feeling and agitation to try to get at faith.

Now this all results from misapprehension of what faith is. Many seem not to see that faith is the simplest thing in the world. Little children understand it and exercise it every day. They have faith in their parents and friends, and it does not cost them a terrible struggle and a great fermentation of feeling to get it. It seems as natural to them as their very breath. Why should they not have confidence in their parents? Why not trust themselves implicitly to their parent's care?

- 8. Others rest in a perfectly spurious faith.
- 9. Others stumble through a partial faith. They do not embrace all the gospel. They seem to understand only a little of it. Hence their faith does not embrace Christ as a Savior from sin, present and future. They fail to embrace the fulness of the promises of gospel salvation, and go on ever more stumbling for the want of a fuller and larger view of gospel truth.
- 10. Many begin at the wrong end in their religion. They expend their efforts upon works first and not upon faith. Hence they are forever laboring and toiling up hill. They do not find the

Spirit's aid to help them, for the good reason that they do not take hold of God's promises by faith for this blessing. Of course they drag along through life in their wretchedness, crying out as they groan along--"O Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death." In fact they live and die in the experience of Rom. 7. If they would at once believe and act as Paul did, how soon might they pass into the experience of Rom. 8. Let them only thank God through Jesus Christ, their Lord--then open their eyes to see that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," and also to see that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus may make them free from the law of sin and death;" and how naturally and speedily might they enter upon a new stage of Christian experience! In Rom. 7, Paul describes the case of one who begins at the wrong end, and labors hard up hill because he labors without faith.

- 11. Those who begin thus at the wrong end do not conceive rightly of a justified or gospel state of mind. Take the man of Rom. 7: what conception has he of a justified state of mind as described in Rom. 8? What does he know in his experience of that spontaneous faith and love, described so beautifully and so vividly in John 4 and 7? There Christ says of the real waters of life--"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life;" and "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The love and the faith of the gospel, having taken root within, develop themselves spontaneously and pour out their gushing influences over all the outward life.

O when will Christians understand the difference between beginning outside as if they thought to work in their religion through the skin, instead of beginning with the heart and planting first of all its deep foundations there in faith and love?

- 12. One class of legalists have regard simply to the letter, and of course their religion is made up of perpetual doing, doing; while another class have caught a glimpse of the law, and are therefore dissatisfied with themselves, and groaning as in Rom. 7, under a body of sin and death, which they do not come with to Christ for relief and salvation. They have seen so much of the purity of the law and of the sin of their own hearts that they feel condemned; but not coming by faith to Jesus Christ, they remain under condemnation and uncleansed from sin. Occasionally they have seasons of better feelings, occurring perhaps in the hours of Sabbath worship or under some specially exciting circumstances; but ere long these emotions subside, and they are as much disgusted with their experience as ever.

Often it is the case that their class of persons are not only dissatisfied with themselves, but with everybody else. They look upon the religious state of their brethren through jaundiced eyes and see nothing as they think it should be. How is it, say they, that you can be satisfied with your present state, or have any peace of mind at all? I am in as good a state as you are, but I am not by any means satisfied with myself. I live as near right as you do, but I am surely far from being right. You must be altogether deluded. You think yourself nearly, or quite free from sin; but I know you are not, for if you are, I am too; but I know that I am not, and therefore know that you are not.

Now such persons do not seem to consider that the outward life is not always an index to the inward, and that of two persons whose outward life is substantially the same, one may



live by faith and walk humbly with God, while the other lives only by works and in the deepest guilt of unbelief.

## REMARKS.

1. Christ speaks of faith as if it were the whole of religion. We have seen why he should. It is the natural root from which a religious life springs.
2. We may see why Paul says that faith establishes the law. It does so both because it embraces and honors God's system of atonement, and because it works by love and thus begets a spirit of sincere obedience to law.
3. The exact difference between a legal and a gospel life is this: the gospel life is a spontaneity of faith and love. A legal life is a spontaneity of selfishness. Sincere and hearty obedience flows naturally from faith and from love. It must be so, and always will be. Just as naturally does selfishness, when it aims to be religious at all, put on the type of legality.
4. Sinners look upon religion in a selfish light, and hence regard it as gloomy, cheerless; and its self-denials as a life of painfulness. Judging of its duties by their own state of mind and principles of action, they see it only repulsive and profitless. Since it does not promise them earthly riches, or earthly honor, or sensual delight, they see no beauty in it that they should desire it. Since it demands a reasonable subjection of those appetites which they delight to indulge, they think it a most burdensome system. If they would look at it, in a directly opposite point of view, they might see it as it is. Is it any self denial or hardship for Love to seek to please? There is real affection between that mother and her child. Now why does she make up a little nosegay and bring it in so cheerfully and sweetly to her little one? Is this a grievous act of self denial to the affectionate mother?

Or observe how the sea-captain gathers up the choicest things he can from the ends of the earth to bring home to the wife he loves. Is this a hardship? Does he drag out a miserable bondage in performing services of this sort for his beloved wife? If not, then you may know how to judge of the self-denials and hardships of the true Christian's life. It is not the gospel Christian, but the legalist, who is dragging his snail's pace up the hard hill of his religious life. Ah, his whole religion is nothing better than penance--a penance of such sort as God neither asks nor accepts. Sinner, you misconceive of religion, and your misconception results from your selfishness. If in the place of selfishness you had true love to God, you would see far other things in religion than what you now see. Go and ask that young convert how all these waters of life taste to him. He will tell you that they are sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb. If you would know this, try it. O, when will you understand what religion is, and having understood it, yield your heart at once in obedience to its claims? Then should your peace be like a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

## 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)*.

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**End of the 1849 Collection.**