

What Saith the Scripture?

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GLOSSARY

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

Christ's Yoke Is Easy

Lecture I

January 2, 1861

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Matt. 11:29-30: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

I propose to remark especially on the first clause of each of these verses -- "Take my yoke upon you -- for my yoke is easy."

I. What is intended by this yoke?

II. What is it to take the yoke of Christ?

III. Christ's yoke is easy.

IV. To whom is this yoke of Christ easy?

I. In enquiring upon this subject the first question is, What is intended by this yoke?

The yoke of Christ is his revealed will, his authority. The word here rendered yoke literally means a band, or something that binds.

II. What is it to take the yoke of Christ?

- 1. To take the yoke of Christ is to accept his will as our universal rule of action.
- 2. To take Christ's yoke is to enter into a voluntary state of entire subjection to him.
- 3. To take Christ's yoke is to commit ourselves to a state of voluntary, loving, confiding servitude.
- 4. To take Christ's yoke is to commit ourselves to universal obedience to Christ from love to him, sympathy with him, and confidence in him. This is no doubt the true idea of taking Christ's yoke upon us.

III. Christ's yoke is easy.

- 1. This the text affirms. The meaning of the word is agreeable, gentle, gracious, useful, kind.
- 2. Christ's yoke is easy because it is love's yoke. It is good-will universally to us. Every requirement is imposed upon us for our own good, and the highest good of the great family of which we are members. Christ's will is never arbitrary, never capricious, never selfish, requires nothing of us at any time without the strictest reference to our own highest good.
- 3. His yoke is easy because he never prohibits anything, and never imposes upon us any restraint except for our own good, or for the good of the race to which we belong. If at any time he restrains us, or deprives us of anything that we would like, it is love's restraint. He sees that it would be injurious to us, injurious to the world, and consequently dishonorable to him; and therefore enlightened love compels him to restrain us.

We are ignorant, often not able to judge for ourselves; we often suppose ourselves to need that which would greatly injure us. He is infinitely wise, his love is always directed by infinite wisdom; and therefore in everything in which he commands or restrains us, love is his only motive.

- 4. The service which we are required to render him is only a love-service. It consists wholly in love, and its spontaneous fruits and results. He requires nothing but what love will willingly, and joyfully, and spontaneously do. He requires us to love him; and surely this requirement cannot be grievous, inasmuch as he presents to us infinite reasons for loving him.
- 5. Christ's yoke is easy because the state of servitude into which we voluntarily enter, is a state of the highest liberty, the truest, most perfect liberty. It is just that course of life and conduct which, above all others, a loving heart prefers. It is really doing just as we please. A heart that loves Christ supremely, is the only heart that really takes this yoke of Christ. Now this loving state of mind prefers above all other courses of life just that which Christ requires. It is therefore doing according to our own highest pleasure to do his pleasure; and therefore his service is the truest and highest liberty.
- 6. Christ's yoke is easy, because, although a state of subjection, it is the very opposite of a state of bondage. Although his yoke is a band, still it is love's band. It is the opposite of slavery. This service rendered to Christ is not a legal constraint or re-strait. It is not slavish fear, it is not the thumbscrew of conscience to a must-do, a must-serve-the Lord; but it is a preference of him and his service so deep and radical, and all-pervading, that no other conceivable way or course of life is so agreeable as just that which Christ requires.
- 7. Christ's yoke is easy because it is not only agreeable, but in the highest degree useful to ourselves, to our friends, to the world, to the kingdom of Christ.

As I have already said, the word rendered easy, means sometimes useful, agreeable, kind, gentle, gracious. If Christ's requirements were such as consulted only his interests and not our own, his yoke might not be so easy. But since he loves us, is aiming by his

requirements to secure our own highest good, has no selfish end whatever in view in any case, his yoke is truly easy in the sense of being in the highest degree useful to us.

- 8. Christ's yoke is easy because he only requires a love-service; and he gives us a love-reward. He does not stipulate to pay us upon the principle of justice; nor do we stipulate to serve him for pay. He has no servants but love-servants. Those that sympathize with him, that love his person, are devoted to the great interests for which he lives, and have entire confidence in him. In short, all his servants serve him because they love him and love his service. To all such he gives a love-reward. It is not pay on the score of justice, it is not what they deserve, but what his bountiful love is pleased to give them. He gives them more than pay, more than a reward on the principle of justice, infinitely more. His servants all prefer to leave the reward with his love, they want no stipulation as to wages. We serve him because we love him, and he rewards us because he loves us. All this makes his yoke very easy.
- 9. Christ's yoke is just as easy as enlightened, true love can make it. I said enlightened love, I said true love; that is neither enlightened nor true love that indulges children to their own injury, that suffers them to act upon their impulses without restraint or requirement. Christ loves us too well to indulge us to our hurt. His love is too true to let us go ungoverned, and grow up in self will and perverseness. This yoke is a state of servitude for our own highest good and hence for his glory. He subjects us to his will, and requires us to seek his pleasure because his pleasure is always good. He does not make us slaves, and compel us to serve him in order to promote his interests, without reference to our own. The service which he requires of us does indeed glorify him just for the reason that he governs us for our own good. For if he did not govern us for our own good, it would not be glorious for him to govern us. If the service which he requires of us were not for our own highest good, it would be disgraceful to him, and not for his glory. But because his government is entirely unselfish, because his heart is set upon doing us good, because he has been willing to deny himself for the purpose of promoting our good, because he brings us into a state of voluntary subjection that he may restrain us from doing ourselves and those around us any harm, and requires of us just that course of life which shall conduce most to our peace, our comfort, our highest good in time and in eternity, therefore the yoke is easy and the service redounds to his glory.
- 10. The things which he requires of us are most in accordance with our whole nature. This state of servitude is in entire accordance with our own highest reason, with the most enlightened dictates of our conscience, with the truest, most healthy, and most rational gratification of our every susceptibility of our being. He lays no appetite or passion under any restraint but for our own highest good. So it is with every restraint, every cross, every trial -- every thing in his whole treatment of us is demanded by our nature and relations as the condition of our highest well-being.
- 11. In short, Christ's yoke is easy because it is really more of a divine charm or enchantment, than a yoke of bondage. The soul enters into a state of servitude, and takes this yoke, because constrained by a view of his love. It continues in this service, and clings to this state of servitude, because bound fast by the cords of this love of Christ. In short, this servitude consists in just this, it is the soul's continual offering of itself as a living sacrifice to Christ, a mere yielding of itself to the divine charm of Christ's all-prevailing love. The soul is drawn in this

servitude, and not driven. It is called with an effectual calling; it is persuaded by an effectual persuasion; it is overcome and conquered, and subdued, and held by the charm of Christ's love.

IV. I enquire in the next place, To whom is this yoke of Christ easy?

- 1. Not to the hypocrite who only profess to take it, but does not in fact love the Savior. There are many who profess to be religious, and to be the servants of Christ, who are continually complaining of the severity of the servitude. To them his commandments are grievous, his yoke is heavy, unendurable. They will sing,

"Reason I love, her counsels weigh,

And all her words approve;

But still, I find it hard to obey,

And harder still to love."

This class of persons are living in the seventh of Romans. They make their resolutions, and as often break them. They cry out, "O wretched man that I am." The Bible has said, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It has also said that Christ's "commandments are not grievous." And in this text we have Christ's own testimony that his yoke is easy. But there are many professors of religion who regard religion as a thorny way.

"True, 'tis a strait and thorny way,"

they say. With them it is not as "the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Their experience is not in accordance with the Bible at all. They do not find their religion a peace-giving religion. They do not know the kingdom of God in their experience to be "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The fact is, they have made a radical mistake; they have not taken Christ's yoke. They have taken the yoke of the law upon stiff necks, and therefore they find their religion a perfect bondage. Let no such one suppose himself to be really in the accepted service of Christ.

- 2. Christ's yoke is not easy to the selfish, who only take it outwardly, from fear or hope of reward. There are many who profess to be Christians, who have no true love to Christ himself, no true sympathy with him, so consequently they have no joy in his service, no pleasure in it for its own sake. They have undertaken to be religious simply to secure something for themselves; and they work hard to make something out of it. But they do not find Christ's yoke easy because it is not a spontaneous love-service. It is not that course of life which above all others they choose because they love the Savior supremely, but it is something which they must comply with as a condition of being saved. It will not do to lose their souls, therefore they must be religious at any rate, though they find it exceedingly hard to be so. But this is not Christ's yoke, this is not a love-service; this band is not a band of love that binds them to the cross of Christ.
- 3. Christ's yoke is not easy to the self-willed. There are those who profess to be religious whose

wills have never been subdued to Christ. They are like unweaned children; and they are continually chafing in their bondage as if Christ's yoke were iron. Of course their state of servitude is not a love-service, is not the true yoke of Christ.

- 4. Christ's yoke is not easy to any who are not constrained by his love.

But it is easy to every one who really understands what his yoke is, and truly takes it upon himself. It is easy to all who truly choose Christ as their sovereign Lord, their Head, their Savior, who enter into sympathy with him and have confidence in him, who make common cause with him and merge their will in his, who in all things trust him. To all this class, who thus really take this yoke upon them, it is easy. And I might add, that the same is true of all the burdens which he really imposes upon us. Christ's yoke is easy and his burden is light to all truly loving, confiding, and submissive souls.

REMARKS.

1. Then let it be understood that Christ's real yoke, or the true service of Christ, is never hard. His real yoke is never heavy. It is self-will and selfishness that at any time fault the yoke or the service of Christ.

2. If what we call religion is burdensome, it is not Christ's yoke, it is not Christ's religion. If we make an uphill business of it, and if we find it "hard to obey, and harder still to love," Christ says to us, Who has required this at your hand? What I require of you is a love-service, not this slavish service.

If you love me not, if you do not serve me from love, I abhor your doings. Let no one think himself truly religious whose religion is a bondage, and not the highest liberty.

3. Whatever is hard in religion is made so by our want of heart, our want of love, our want of confidence; and is therefore not Christ's yoke at all. It is not true religion, it is not Christian liberty, but legal bondage.

4. All truly religious duties are easy. If we make them hard, they are not a love-service, and not what Christ requires. If we make them hard we spoil them. If we go complainingly about his service, grumbling about the difficulties and the hardness of his service, he loathes our bondage, he cannot accept it.

5. Let it be understood, then, that they who make religion a hard, uphill matter, have no Gospel religion. They are wearing, not Christ's yoke, but the yoke of the law; and that, too, laid upon their stiff-neckedness and unbrokenness of heart.

6. This subject will throw light upon the true nature of the Christian warfare. This is not hard, a something to which we are to be screwed up, and whipped up, by our conscience. It is only love to Christ spontaneously resisting temptation to displease him. It is not hard work for the most affectionate husband or wife to resist infidelity to him or her whom each loves most. This resistance is not that to which we are whipped up by a mere sense of obligation, or fear of consequences. It is the spontaneous resistance of love to that which is entirely inconsistent with it. Such is the Christian

warfare.

7. Nothing that love cannot well afford to do is ever required of us in our Christian life. Of course if everything is for our highest good, as well as for the highest glory of Christ, love can well afford to do it, or abstain from it.

8. Love cannot afford to have one of Christ's commandments abated, nor one of his prohibitions relaxed. His will is perfect; his true service is the perfection of liberty; his true yoke is as easy as possible.

9. Let no one judge of Christ's religion by the common representations of it. Should we judge of Christ's religion, from the complaints of many of its professors, we should infer that Christ kept his children on short allowance, that he required "brick without straw," that he is a hard master and even a cruel slaveholder. Their mouths are full of complaints. They do not hesitate to say in their prayers and in their conversation that which implies that Christ's commandments are most grievous, that his yoke is too heavy to be borne, that he supplies their spiritual wants so sparingly that he keeps them little short of absolute famine and starvation. Nay, they represent the commandments as beyond the possibility of obedience, and the service which he requires as so entirely above their reach, that by no grace received in this life are they ever able to obey him. Now this is surely as opposite to the teachings of Christ and this text, as possible. Just compare this text and many similar ones, to the old confession of faith, that "no man, since the fall, is able, either in his own strength or by any grace received in this life, to obey the commandments of God."

Where did they get this? Is this in accordance with Christ's teaching in this text? Is this according to the text in which it is said, that "his commandments are not grievous," and that all "his ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths are peace"? The fact is, that Christ's religion has been grossly misrepresented by its professors.

Such a statement as this in the confession of faith is a stumbling block, and as contrary to the teachings of Christ as possible.

10. You that are not Christians may see your mistake in this regard. You have been misled. You have been deceived by the complaining spirit that you have heard among professed Christians. You have thought religion was hard, something unendurable, impracticable, something not suited to your present nature, relations, and condition. But those that have stumbled you are not Christians. If you would read your Bible you would see that these complaints are not the Christian spirit; and that all this talking and praying which really implies that religion is an up-hill matter, something so far above our reach as to keep the mind in a constant strain that is unendurable by human nature -- that this is all a mistake.

The fact is, the kingdom of God, when it is really established in the soul, is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is the charm of Christ's love revealed to the soul, sweetly drawing it away into a perpetual offering of itself to a delightful love-service to Christ. Everything that is hard about it is made so by unbelief, by a want of love, by self-will. All that, therefore, is without the pale of Christ's true service. Whatever is not done for love, is no acceptable service rendered to Christ.

11. Those of you whose religion is a bondage, can in the light of this subject discover your mistake. Who has required this bond-service at your hands? Christ is no slave-holder. He employs no slave-drivers to whip you to duty. If the law as a schoolmaster had brought you to Christ, you would have escaped from this bondage.

But, beloved, do not mistake your bond-service for true religion. Do not mistake the yoke of the law for the yoke of Christ. Do not mistake, do not mistake this drudgery in which you engage, and which you call religion, for that spontaneous love-service which Christ requires. The difficulty is, you have not taken Christ's yoke.

12. In the light of this subject, all professors of religion can see whether and how far you really serve Christ. Do you ever find passages in your experience, in which all is a spontaneous love-service, natural, peaceful, joyous? If you have never had this experience, you have never yet come to Christ at all. If you have had this experience and have fallen from it, you have fallen from the real acceptable service of Christ.

Your present state, and your present religion, is not a Christian state of mind, nor the accepted service of Christ. You have fallen into the bondage of your own unbelief. And who has required this bond-service at your hand? This is not Christ's yoke.

13. How much ruinous misapprehension exists in regard to what constitutes the Christian religion. The great mass of professors of religion are in such bondage -- and the same is true, I fear, of many ministers, -- that they grossly misrepresent the religion of Jesus. By their teaching, by their prayers, by all that you see and hear from them, you would get the impression that the religion of Christ is the most difficult, up-hill, unendurable task, that ever any one undertook. It amounts to a gross libel upon the religion of Jesus. They profess to be Christ's disciples, profess to wear Christ's yoke; and yet "it is that which neither we nor our fathers have ever been able to bear."

Alas! that Christ is so dishonored, so contradicted, so misrepresented, his religion presented in such a repulsive light as to frighten the young, and make them think it is unendurable, except as the less of two evils. It may be a less evil, they think, to wear this yoke of iron than to go to hell; but it is at best so hard, so void of comfort, so almost unendurable, that for this life, to say the least, a course of sin is far preferable to Christ's religion. So far as this world is concerned, they cannot afford to be religious. It is only to escape from hell that the thought, or the effort, can be endured. But how gross is this misrepresentation; and how fatal is the delusion that this fastens upon the minds of those that are not religious.

14. It is not merely a ruinous misapprehension to those who are without, but to those who belong to the church and yet are living a life of bondage. Their misapprehension of the religion of Jesus is destructive. It is not only a stumbling block to others, but the ruin of their own souls. When will these bondmen learn that this is not what Christ requires at their hands? He pities your agonizing struggles to wear the yoke of the law which neither you nor your fathers have been able to bear. He beseeches you to really give him your hearts, to enter into his love-service, to take his sweet yoke of love upon you that you may breathe easily and walk at liberty as the sons of God.

15. What folly to make only a pretense of being Christ's servants, to pretend only to wear his yoke. This is of no use. To render him any other than a love-service is not truly to serve him at all; you gain nothing by it to yourselves; you do no good to others by this bond-service; you do not meet the wishes of Christ at all. What motive then can you have for this folly? Do you not know that Christ is greatly dishonored by those that leave their hearts in the world, and consequently make their religion a bondage? I beseech you misrepresent him not; deceive not yourselves. Mislead no others. Serve him lovingly, or attempt not to serve him at all. Take his easy yoke and render him a love-service, or no service at all. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," and a cheerful giver only. He will not accept a service that is not a heart-service, that is not a free-service.

16. Remember that all duty acceptably performed, must be free, it must be cheerful, it must be loving. Let no one deceive himself by supposing that he does his duty, when he does it in the spirit of bondage, and not from love.

17. From what has been said, it must be seen that there is real enjoyment in wearing Christ's true yoke, in all true religion, in all that Christ really requires.

We always enjoy pleasing those whom we most love. In this we necessarily find our truest and highest enjoyment, in the promotion of the honor and in doing the pleasure of those whom we supremely love.

Whatever is not enjoyed, is not true religion. We often hear people say they do not enjoy religion. They are religious, they say, but they are not at present enjoying religion. But this is a mistake. If they have true religion, that is, the religion of love, it must in its very workings, produce enjoyment.

18. If you look steadily at this subject, you will see how much Christ's account of his real service differs from the common experience. Now, is Christ's account of his own religion to be taken as true? or are we to suppose these experiences, that are really inconsistent with it, are true religion? Christ's own account of his religion must stand! He has told us what service is acceptable to him, and he is to be the judge in such matters. Let no one pretend that his experience is Christian, unless he finds that Christ's yoke is easy.

19. This false, but common experience, is the world's great stumbling block, and legal ministers are helping forward the calamity. Really, many of the representations from the pulpit are such a gross misrepresentation of the true religion of Jesus, that whole churches are in bondage and the ungodly without the church are perfectly afraid of religion.

20. Christ is not responsible for these slavish experiences. They are only the result of selfishness and unbelief. He cannot away with them, he abhors them. They are his dishonor, the church's stumbling block, and the world's ruin.

21. Christ's true service is the soul's true rest. In immediate connection with the text, you remember he said "ye shall find rest unto your souls." True religion is truly the soul's recreation, the soul's amusement, the soul's highest liberty; it is the rest of faith, the deep repose of loving confidence. It is

love, and only love, with its spontaneous fruits. This is the whole of it; and this is the best and truest sense the soul's rest.

22. The real service which Christ requires of us could not be easier and still be real. Did he require less than love with all its spontaneous fruits, it would not be real. But if it is love and its spontaneous fruits, it could not be easier.

23. We cannot afford to have less to do than Christ calls upon us to do. We need not fear to have more to do than is for our own highest good.

24. We cannot afford to have less to bear, fewer crosses, fewer duties, fewer burdens. We cannot afford to have anything lighter, anything easier, or anything more agreeable. The whole of his service is the most useful, the most truly agreeable, the most in accordance with our whole nature and all our relations, of any course of life possible or conceivable.

And now what do you say? Will you that never have taken Christ's yoke, now take it? Will you now offer yourself a willing sacrifice to be Christ's living servant forever? Will you who have worn the bondage of the law, lay it aside, give up your selfishness, your self seeking, your unbelief, and truly embrace Christ, and take his easy yoke, and find rest for your souls?

Christ Our Advocate

Lecture II

January 16, 1861

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Text.--1 John 2:1, 2: "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

The Bible abounds with governmental analogies. These are designed for our instruction; but if we receive instruction from them, it is because there is a real analogy in many points between the government of God and human governments.

I propose to inquire,

I. What is the idea of an advocate?

II. Purposes for which an advocate may be employed.

III. The sense in which Christ is the advocate of sinners.

IV. What is implied in his being the advocate of sinners?

V. The essential qualifications of an advocate under such circumstances.

VI. What his plea in behalf of sinners is.

I. What is the idea of an advocate when the term is used to express a governmental office or relation?

An advocate is one who pleads the cause of another, who represents another, and acts in his name; one who uses his influence in behalf of another by his request.

II. Purposes for which an advocate may be employed.

- 1. To secure justice, in case any question involving justice is to be tried.
- 2. To defend the accused. If one has been accused of committing a crime, an advocate may be employed to conduct his trial on his behalf; to defend him against the charge, and prevent his conviction if possible.
- 3. An advocate may be employed to secure a pardon, when a criminal has been justly condemned, and is under sentence. That is, an advocate may be employed either to secure justice for his client, or to obtain mercy for him, in case he is condemned; may be employed either to prevent his conviction, or when convicted, may be employed in setting aside the execution of the law upon the criminal.

III. The sense in which Christ is the advocate of sinners.

He is employed to plead the cause of sinners, not at the bar of justice; not to defend them against the charge of sin, because the question of their guilt is already settled. The Bible represents them as condemned already; and such is the fact, as every sinner knows. Every sinner in the world knows that he has sinned, and that consequently he must be condemned by the law of God. This office, then, is exercised by Christ in respect to sinners; not at the bar of justice, but at the throne of grace, at the footstool of sovereign mercy. He is employed, not to prevent the conviction of the sinner, but to prevent his execution; not to prevent his being condemned, but being already condemned, to prevent his being damned.

IV. What is implied in his being the advocate of sinners?

- 1. His being employed at a throne of grace and not at the bar of justice, to plead for sinners, as such, and not for those who are merely charged with sin, but the charge not established. This implies that the guilt of the sinner is already ascertained, the verdict of guilty given, the

sentence of the law pronounced, and that the sinner awaits his execution.

- 2. His being appointed by God as the advocate of sinners implies a merciful disposition in God. If God had not been mercifully disposed towards sinners, no advocate had been appointed, no question of forgiveness had been raised.
- 3. It implies also that the exercise of mercy on certain conditions is possible. Not only is God mercifully disposed, but to manifest this disposition in the actual pardon of sin is possible. Had not this been the case, no advocate had been appointed.
- 4. It implies that there is hope, then, for the condemned. Sinners are prisoners; but in this world they are not yet prisoners of despair, but are prisoners of hope.
- 5. It implies that there is a governmental necessity for the interposition of an advocate; that the sinner's relations are such, and his character such, that he can not be admitted to plead his own cause in his own name. He is condemned, he is no longer on trial. In this respect he is under sentence for a capital crime; consequently he is an outlaw, and the government can not recognize him as being capable of performing any legal act. His relations to the government forbid that in his own name, or in his own person, he should appear before God. So far as his own personal influence with the government is concerned, he is as a dead man--he is civilly dead. Therefore he must appear by his next friend, or by his advocate, if he is heard at all. He may not appear in his own name and in his own person, but must appear by an advocate who is acceptable to the government.

V. I next call attention to the essential qualifications of an advocate under such circumstances.

- 1. He must be the uncompromising friend of the government. Observe, he appears to pray for mercy to be extended to the guilty party whom he represents. Of course he must not himself be the enemy of the government of whom he asks so great a favor; but he should be known to be the devoted friend of the government whose mercy he prays may be extended to the guilty.
- 2. He must be the uncompromising friend of the dishonored law. The sinner has greatly dishonored, and by his conduct denounced, both the law and the law-giver. By his uniform disobedience the sinner has proclaimed, in the most emphatic manner, that the law is not worthy of obedience, and that the law-giver is a tyrant. Now the advocate must be a friend to this law; he must not sell himself to the dishonor of the law; nor consent to its dishonor. He must not reflect upon the law; for in this case he places the law-giver in a condition in which, if he should set aside the penalty and exercise mercy, he would consent to the dishonor of the law, and by a public act himself condemn the law. The advocate seeks to dispense with the execution of the law; but he must not offer as a reason, that the law is unreasonable and unjust. For in this case he renders it impossible for the law-giver to set aside the execution without consenting to the assertion that the law is not good. In that case the law-giver would condemn himself instead of the sinner. It is plain, then, that he must be the uncompromising friend of the law, or he can never secure the exercise of mercy without involving the law-giver himself in the crime of dishonoring the law.

- 3. The advocate must be righteous; that is, he must be clear of any complicity in the crime of the sinner. He must have no fellowship with his crime; there must be no charge or suspicion of guilt resting upon the advocate. Unless he himself be clear of the crime, of which the criminal is accused, he is not the proper person to represent him before a throne of mercy.
- 4. He must be the compassionate friend of the sinner. Not of his sins, but of the sinner himself. This distinction is very plain. Every one knows that a parent can be greatly opposed to the wickedness of his children, while he has great compassion for their person. He is not a true friend to the sinner who really sympathizes with his sins. I have several times heard sinners render as an excuse for not being Christians, that their friends were opposed to it. They have a great many dear friends who are opposed to their becoming Christians and obeying God. They desire them to live on in their sins. They do not want them to change and become holy, but desire them to remain in their worldly-mindedness and sinfulness. I tell such persons that those are their friends in the same sense that the devil is their friend. And would they call the devil their good friend, their kind friend, because he sympathizes with their sins, and wishes them not to become Christians? Would you call a man your friend, who wished you to commit murder, or robbery, to tell a lie, or commit any crime? Suppose he should come and appeal to you, and because you are his friend should desire you to commit some great crime, would you regard that man as your friend?

No! No man is a true friend of a sinner, unless he is desirous that he should abandon his sins. If any person would have you continue in your sins, he is the adversary of your soul. Instead of being in any proper sense your friend, he is playing the devil's part to ruin you.

Now observe: Christ is the compassionate friend of sinners, a friend in the best and truest sense. He does not sympathize with your sins, but his heart is set upon saving you from your sins. I said he must be the compassionate friend of sinners; and his compassion must be stronger than death, or he will never meet the necessities of the case.

- 5. Another qualification must be, that he is able sufficiently to honor the law, which sinners by their transgression have dishonored. He seeks to avoid the execution of the dishonored law of God. The law having been dishonored by sin in the highest degree, must either be honored by its execution on the criminal, or the law-giver must in some other way bear testimony in favor of the law, before he can justly dispense with the execution of its penalty. The law is not to be repealed; the law must not be dishonored. It is the law of God's nature, the unalterable law of his government, the eternal law of heaven, the law for the government of moral agents in all worlds, and in all time, and to all eternity. Sinners have borne their most emphatic testimony against it, by pouring contempt upon it in utterly refusing to obey it. Now sin must not be treated lightly; this law must be honored.

God may pour a flash of glory over it by executing its penalty upon the whole race that have despised it. This would be the solemn testimony of God to sustain its authority and vindicate its claims. If our advocate appears before God to ask for the remission of sin, that the penalty of this law may be set aside and not executed, the question immediately arises, But how shall the dishonor of this law be avoided? What shall compensate for the reckless and blasphemous contempt with which this law has been treated? How shall sin

be forgiven without apparently making light of it?

It is plain that sin has placed the whole question in such a light that God's testimony must in some way be borne in a most emphatic manner against sin, and to sustain the authority of this dishonored law.

It behooves the advocate of sinners to provide himself with a plea that shall meet this difficulty. He must meet this necessity, if he would secure the setting aside of the penalty. He must be able to provide an adequate substitute for its execution. He must be able to do that which will as effectually bear testimony in favor of the law and against sin as the execution of the law upon the criminal would do. In other words, he must be able to meet the demands of public justice.

- 6. He must be willing to volunteer a gratuitous service. He cannot be called upon in justice to volunteer a service, or suffer for the sake of sinners. He may volunteer his service, and it may be accepted; but if he does volunteer his service, he must be able and willing to endure whatever pain or sacrifice is necessary to meet the case.

If the law must be honored by obedience; if, "without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission;" if an emphatic governmental testimony must be borne against sin, and in honor of the law; if he must become the representative of sinners, offering himself before the whole universe as a propitiation for sin, he must be willing to meet the case and make the sacrifice.

- 7. He must have a good plea. In other words, when he appears before the mercy-seat, he must be able to present such considerations as shall really meet the necessities of the case, and render it safe, proper, honorable, glorious in God to forgive.

VI. I now come to inquire, what his plea in behalf of sinners is.

- 1. It should be remembered that the appeal is not to justice. Since the fall of man, God has plainly suspended the execution of strict justice upon our race. To us, as a matter of fact, he has set upon a throne of mercy. Mercy, and not justice, has been the rule of his administration, since men were involved in sin.

This is simple fact. Men do sin, and they are not cut off immediately and sent to hell. The execution of justice is suspended; and God is represented as seated upon a throne of grace, or upon a mercy-seat. It is here at a mercy-seat, that Christ executes the office of advocate for sinners.

- 2. Christ's plea for sinners cannot be that they are not guilty. They are guilty, and condemned. No question can be raised as it respects their guilt and their ill-desert; such questions are settled. It has often appeared strange to me, that men overlook the fact that they are condemned already, and that no question respecting their guilt or desert of punishment can ever be raised.
- 3. Christ as our advocate cannot, and need not, plead a justification. A plea of justification admits the fact charged; but asserts that under the circumstances the accused had a right to do as

he did. This plea, Christ can never make. This is entirely out of place, the case having been already tried, and sentence passed.

- 4. He may not plead what will reflect, in any wise, upon the law. He cannot plead that the law was too strict in its precept, or too severe in its penalty; for in that case he would not really plead for mercy, but for justice. He would plead in that case that no injustice might be done the criminal. For if he intimates that the law is not just, then the sinner does not deserve the punishment; hence it would be unjust to punish him, and his plea would amount to this, that the sinner be not punished, because he does not deserve it. But if this plea should be allowed to prevail, it would be a public acknowledgment on the part of God that his law was unjust. But this may never be.
- 5. He may not plead anything that shall reflect upon the administration of the law-giver. Should he plead that men had been hardly treated by the law-giver, either in their creation, or by his providential arrangements, or by suffering them to be so tempted--or if, in any wise, he brings forward a plea that reflects upon the law-giver, in creation, or in the administration of his government, the law-giver cannot listen to his plea, and forgive the sinner, without condemning himself. In that case, instead of insisting that the sinner should repent, virtually the law-giver would be called upon himself to repent.
- 6. He may not plead any excuse whatever for the sinner in mitigation of his guilt, or in extenuation of his conduct. For if he does, and the law-giver should forgive in answer to such a plea, he would confess that he had been wrong, and that the sinner did not deserve the sentence that had been pronounced against him.

He must not plead that the sinner does not deserve the damnation of hell; for, should he urge this plea, it would virtually accuse the justice of God, and would be equivalent to begging that the sinner might not be sent unjustly to hell. This would not be a proper plea for mercy, but rather an issue with justice. It would be asking that the sinner might not be sent to hell, not because of the mercy of God, but because the justice of God forbids it. This will never be.

- 7. He can not plead as our advocate that he has paid our debt, in such a sense that he can demand our discharge on the ground of justice. He has not paid our debt in such a sense that we do not still owe it. He has not atoned for our sins in such a sense that we might not still be justly punished for them. Indeed such a thing is impossible and absurd. One being cannot suffer for another in such a sense as to remove the guilt of that other. He may suffer for another's guilt in such a sense that it will be safe to forgive the sinner, for whom the suffering has been endured; but the suffering of the substitute can never, in the least degree, diminish the intrinsic guilt of the criminal. Our advocate may urge that he has borne such suffering for us to honor the law that we had dishonored, that now it is safe to extend mercy to us; but he never can demand our discharge on the ground that we do not deserve to be punished. The fact of our intrinsic guilt remains, and must forever remain; and our forgiveness is just as much an act of sovereign mercy, as if Christ had never died for us.
- 8. But Christ may plead his sin-offering to sanction the law, as fulfilling a condition, upon

which we may be forgiven.

This offering is not to be regarded as the ground upon which justice demands our forgiveness. The appeal of our advocate is not to this offering as payment in such a sense that now in justice he can demand that we shall be set free. No. As I said before, it is simply the fulfilling of a condition, upon which it is safe for the mercy of God to arrest and set aside the execution of the law, in the case of the penitent sinner.

Some theologians appear to me to have been unable to see this distinction. They insist upon it that the atonement of Christ is the ground of our forgiveness. They seem to assume that he literally bore the penalty for us in such a sense that Christ now no longer appeals to mercy, but demands justice for us. To be consistent they must maintain that Christ does not plead at a mercy-seat for us, but having paid our debt, appears before a throne of justice, and demands our discharge.

I cannot accept this view. I insist that his offering could not touch the question of our intrinsic desert of damnation. His appeal is to the infinite mercy of God, to his loving disposition to pardon; and he points to his atonement, not as demanding our release, but as fulfilling a condition upon which our release is honorable to God. His obedience to the law and the shedding of his blood he may plead as a substitute for the execution of the law upon us--in short, he may plead the whole of his work as God-man and mediator. Thus he may give us the full benefit of what he has done, to sustain the authority of law and to vindicate the character of the law-giver, as fulfilling conditions that have rendered it possible for God to be just and still justify the penitent sinner.

- 9. But the plea is directed to the merciful disposition of God. He may point to the promise made to him in Isaiah, chap. 52, from v. 13 to the end, and chap. 53, vs. 1-3.

"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

"As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:)

"So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."

- 10. He may plead also that he becomes our surety, that he undertakes for us, that he is our

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and point to his official relations; his infinite fullness, willingness, and ability to restore us to obedience, and to fit us for the service, the employments, and enjoyments of heaven. It is said that he is made the surety of a better covenant than the legal one; and a covenant founded upon better promises.

- 11. He may urge as a reason for our pardon the great pleasure it will afford to God, to set aside the execution of the law. "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Judgment is his strange work; but He delighteth in mercy.

It is said of Victoria that when her prime minister presented a pardon, and asked her if she would sign a pardon in the case of some individual, who was sentenced to death, she seized the pen, and said, "yes! with all my heart!" Could such an appeal be made to a woman's heart, think you, without its leaping for joy to be placed in a position in which it could save the life of a fellow-being?

It is said that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" and think you not that it affords God the sincerest joy to be able to forgive the wretched sinner, and save him from the doom of hell? He has no pleasure in our death.

It is a grief to him to be obliged to execute his law on sinners; and no doubt it affords him infinitely higher pleasure to forgive us, than it does us to be forgiven. He knows full well, what are the unutterable horrors of hell and damnation. He knows the sinner can not bear it. He says, "Can thine heart endure, and can thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee? And what wilt thou do when I shall punish thee?" Our advocate knows that to punish the sinner is that in which God has no delight--that He will forgive and sign the pardon with all His heart.

And think you such an appeal to the heart of God, to his merciful disposition, will have no avail? It is said of Christ, our Advocate, that "for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame." So great was the love of our Advocate for us that he regarded it a pleasure and a joy so great to save us from hell, that he counted the shame and agony of the cross as a mere trifle--he despised them.

This, then, is a disclosure of the heart of our Advocate. And how surely may he assume that it will afford God the sincerest joy, eternal joy, to be able honorably to seal to us a pardon.

- 12. He may urge the glory that will redound to the Son of God, for the part that he has taken in this work.

Will it not be eternally honorable in the Son to have advocated the cause of sinners? to have undertaken at so great expense to himself a cause so desperate? and to have carried it through at the expense of such agony and blood?

Will not the universe of creatures forever wonder and adore, as they see this advocate surrounded with the innumerable throng of souls, for whom his advocacy has prevailed?

- 13. Our Advocate may plead the gratitude of the redeemed, and the profound thanks and praise of all good beings.

Think you not that the whole family of virtuous beings will forever feel obliged for the intervention of Christ as our Advocate, and for the mercy, forbearance, and love that has saved our race?

REMARKS.

1. You see what it is to become a Christian. It is to employ Christ as your advocate, by committing your cause entirely to him. You cannot be saved by your works, you cannot be saved by your sufferings, by your prayers--in any way except by the intervention of this Advocate. "He ever lives to make intercession for you."

He proposes to undertake your cause; and to be a Christian is to at once surrender your whole cause, your whole life and being to him as your Advocate.

2. He is an Advocate that loses no causes. Every cause committed to him, and continued in his hands, is infallibly gained. His advocacy is all-prevalent. God has appointed him as an advocate; and wherever he appears in behalf of any sinner, who has committed his cause to him, one word of his is sure to prevail. Hence you see,

3. The safety of believers. Christ is always at his post, ever ready to attend to all the concerns of those who have made him their Advocate. He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and abiding in him, you are forever safe.

4. You see the position of unbelievers. You have no advocate. God has appointed an Advocate; but you reject him. You think to get along without. Perhaps some of you think you will be punished for your sins, and not ask forgiveness. Others of you may think you will approach in your own name; and, without any atonement, or without any advocate, you will plead your own cause. But God will not suffer it. He has appointed an Advocate to act in your behalf, and unless you approach through him, God will not hear you.

Out of Christ, he is to you a consuming fire. When the judgment shall set, and you appear in your own name, you will surely appear unsanctified and unsaved. You will not be able to lift up your head; and you will be ashamed to look in the face of the Advocate, who will then sit both as Judge and Advocate.

5. I ask, Have you retained him? Have you by your own consent made him your Advocate?

It is not enough that God should have appointed him to act in this relation.

He cannot act for you in this relation, unless you individually commit yourself and your case to his advocacy.

This is done, as I have said, by confiding, or committing the whole question of your salvation to him.

6. Do any of you say that you are unable to employ him? But remember the fee, which He requires of you, is your heart. You have a heart. It is not money, but your heart that he seeks.

The poor, then, may employ him as well as the rich; the children, who have not a penny of their own, as well as their rich parents. All may employ him, for all have hearts.

7. He tenders his services gratuitously to all, requiring nothing of them but confidence, gratitude, love, obedience. This the poor and the rich alike must render; this they are alike able to render.

8. Can any of you do without him? Have you ever considered how it will be with you? But the question comes now to this--will you consent to give up your sins, and trust your souls to the advocacy of Christ? to give him the fee that he asks, your heart, your confidence, your grateful love, your obedience?

Shall he be your Advocate, or shall he not? Suppose he stood before you, as I do, and in his hand the book of life with a pen dipped in the very light of heaven, and should ask, "Who of you will now consent to make me your Advocate?" Suppose he should inquire of you, sinner, "Can I be of any service to you? Can I do anything for you, dying sinner? Can I befriend and help you in any wise? Can I speak a good word for you? Can I interpose my blood, my death, my life, my advocacy, to save you from the depths of hell? And will you consent? Shall I take down your name? Shall I write it in the book of life? Shall it today be told in heaven that you are saved? And may I report that you have committed your cause to me, and thus give joy in heaven? Or will you reject me, stand upon your own defense, and attempt to carry your cause through at the solemn judgment?"

Sinner, I warn you in the name of Christ, not now to say me nay.

Consent now and here, and let it be written in heaven.

9. Have any of you made his advocacy sure by committing all to him? If you have, he has attended to your cause, because he has secured your pardon; and the evidence you have in your peace of mind. Has he attended to your cause? Have you the inward sense of reconciliation, the inward witness that you believe that you are forgiven, that you are accepted, that Christ has undertaken for you, and that he has already prevailed and secured for you pardon, and given in your own soul the peace of God that passeth understanding to rule in your heart? It is a striking fact in Christian experience, that whenever we really commit our cause to Jesus, he without delay secures our pardon, and in the inward peace that follows, gives us the assurance of our acceptance, that he has interposed his blood, that his blood is accepted for us, that his advocacy has prevailed, and that we are saved.

Do not stop short of this; for if your peace is truly made with God, if you are in fact forgiven, the sting of remorse is gone; there is no longer any chafing or any irritation between your spirit and the Spirit of God; the sense of condemnation and remorse has given place to the spirit of gospel liberty, peace, and love.

The stony heart is gone; the heart of flesh has taken its place; the dry sensibility is melted, and peace

flows like a river. Have you this? Is this a matter of consciousness with you?

If so, then leave your cause, by a continual committal of it, to the advocacy of Christ; abide in him, and let him abide in you, and you are safe as the surroundings of Almighty arms can make you.

Living To Please God

Lecture III

January 30, 1861

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Text.--1 Thes. 4: 1: "Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God."

In speaking from these words, I enquire,

I. What is it to live and walk so as to please God?

II. Why we should so live and walk as to please God?

III. How to please God.

IV. How can I intend to please God?

I. What is it to live and walk so as to please God?

To this I answer --

- 1. To make His pleasure our ultimate end of life; that is, to make His pleasure an end, and not a means of promoting our own. It is possible to aim at pleasing God simply as a means of securing our own salvation. But this is not really aiming to please God as our end, but is aiming to please ourselves as an end, and pleasing God only as a means.
- 2. To make His pleasure our ultimate end, is to aim at pleasing Him for His own sake, and not from some good to ourselves that may result from pleasing Him.
- 3. His pleasure is an infinite good in itself; that is, it is an infinite good to Him. To make His pleasure therefore our end, is to do that which is becoming in us.

- 4. To make His pleasure our supreme end, that is, to care more to please Him than to please ourselves, or more to please Him than to please any and all other beings -- to walk so as to please Him, you must lay supreme stress upon His pleasure. To so live and walk as to please God is in all things to aim at meeting His approbation, meeting His wishes, fulfilling all His pleasure; to intend this, to have this in view, and make this the great motive of all our acting.

II. Why we should so live and walk as to please God?

- 1. God created us for this end, and hence has given us a conscience that universally demands that we should live to please God. He has made this our unalterable law and rule of action. We never fulfil the demands of conscience except as we live to please God.
- 2. His pleasure is always wise and good. He says, I will do all my pleasure." It would not be right in any other being to say that; but in God it is right, for what else could He do? Nothing pleases Him that is not wise and good. He never desires or wishes anything that is not wise and good.
- 3. To thus live to please God is true benevolence to Him; it is to will His good, His highest happiness and well-being. This is the real idea of love to God. It is devotion to His good; or in other words, it is devotion to His gratification or pleasure; it is good-willing to God, willing His infinite happiness and satisfaction. It is aiming to satisfy all His wishes in regard to us; to meet and fulfill all His desires respecting us.

To please Him is to gratify His fatherly heart. To please Him we must meet His views respecting our obligation; we must meet His wishes, we must obey His will, must adjust ourselves to all that He wishes us to be and do.

He is then pleased with us; He is not grieved but gratified. Now to live with this continual aim to be all that God, under the circumstances wants us to be, is to live and walk so as to please God.

- 4. To please Him is to gain His approbation; and this is not only a good to Him, but it is a good to us. The love of approbation is natural to us, and especially the approbation of the good. And to have the approbation of God is of supreme importance to us.

It is a comfort to Him to be able to approve the life that we live, as it is a comfort to parents to be able to approve the lives of their children. And it is a comfort to us to secure His approbation, as it is a comfort to children to secure the approbation of their parents. Nay, the comfort of receiving the approbation of God is infinitely more sweet, consoling, and joyous, than the approbation of all other beings together.

- 5. It follows, that to gain His approbation is to secure our own happiness. Hence to live to please Him is the only sure way of pleasing ourselves. We cannot be satisfied with ourselves unless we are conscious of aiming to satisfy God. While we are conscious of not aiming to meet His approbation, we cannot secure our own approbation. To aim at pleasing Him, then, in all we do, is a condition of securing our own happiness; and more than this, this aim will be sure to

secure our own highest satisfaction.

- 6. It is right to aim in all things at pleasing God, because His pleasure is the most worthy end for which we can live. It is not living for an abstraction. Some people have thought that the end proposed was rather an abstraction than a reality.

But do you account it an abstraction to live to please your mother or your father, your wife, or your dearest friend? That is anything but an abstraction. Your wife, or husband, or friend, would account their own pleasure anything but an abstraction.

I have been amazed sometimes, to hear some people talk of the end of being as an abstraction, as if it were a mere idea, and not the profoundest reality in the universe. What! the end of sentient beings, and especially of moral beings, their highest satisfaction and perfect happiness, an abstraction! Verily, I pity the individual who regards the good pleasure of God as an abstraction -- or the good pleasure of any good being.

- 7. To intend to please God is always safe. It is not safe to make the pleasure of any other being universally our aim. But God is infinitely wise and infinitely good, and we never need to fear to aim at fulfilling all His pleasure.
- 8. It is of no use to live to please ourselves. We never can please ourselves by making this our aim or end. We please ourselves in fact all the less by how much the more singly we aim to please ourselves. We cannot approve of living to please ourselves, and practically treating our own pleasure as the highest good.

Therefore we always violate the laws of our own nature, the laws of our conscience and higher reason, whenever we live to please ourselves. There is always an inward upbraiding, an inward struggle, a mutiny, a self-condemnation, when we live to please ourselves.

- 9. It is not right to make the pleasure of any other being than God our supreme end. This is idolatry. To live to please any other being than God, is to make that being our god, is to practice downright idolatry, is to place another in the very throne belonging to Jehovah.
- 10. It is not safe for us to live to please any other being than God; nor is it safe for them. To make another being our god, is to expose that being to destruction. God is a jealous God, He will not give His glory to another; and if we give another the throne of our hearts, it may prove the destruction of that idol, as well as our own destruction.
- 11. It is essential to peace with self, to peace with God, that we live, and walk, and aim in all things, to meet His pleasure.

III. How to please God.

- 1. To please God you must honestly intend to do so. That is, you must honestly make it your supreme object, and your ultimate object to please God; to please Him from regard to Himself;

to lay absolutely supreme stress upon pleasing Him. Only honestly endeavor thus to please Him, and you will be sure to please Him.

- 2. He always accepts the honest endeavor. "If there be a willing mind," He expressly says, "it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not."

We are so constituted that when we honestly endeavor to please any being, we cannot help assuming that that being ought to accept our endeavor. We have done what we could; nothing more can in justice be required of us. If the endeavor is honest, and the intention right, all is done that the mind can do under the circumstances.

Now, with the honest intention to please God, you cannot commit a single mistake. If the heart is set to please Him, the mind is in an honest state, and will use all the means to obtain light that it can, and will endeavor to the utmost to please Him. Now any mistake that may be made in the state of mind cannot involve sin; for how else could one [aim]? If God will fault us, when we honestly endeavor to please Him, what would He do if we did not honestly endeavor? What else, more or less, should we do, than honestly endeavor to please Him? What else is possible to us? What other obligation can there be than honestly to endeavor to please Him? He must accept honest endeavor, for what else could we do? But do you object, that Paul "verily thought he ought to do so many things contrary to the name of Jesus and Nazareth"? and was not this a sinful mistake?

Paul says he verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But Paul was a Pharisee, a bigot, dishonestly committed against Jesus. He was a persecuting fanatic, and he was just one of those of whom Christ said, "The days shall come when he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service." But does any one suppose that these persecutors were really filled with the love of God; that they were honestly devoted to pleasing a God of love; that they were fair-minded, candid, and really devoted to pleasing the true God? No! their zeal was founded in delusion, and in a delusion in which they were dishonest. They were under a dishonest bias; they assumed that Jesus was a wicked impostor, and that His disciples were deluded fanatics. This they had no right to assume; this assumption was dishonest. It was founded in prejudice. Its roots were roots of bitterness, and its fruit was death. But it remains a truth, that where a mind is truly and honestly committed to pleasing God, in all its honest endeavors, it is and must be accepted.

And it is impossible to conceive that God should condemn us when we honestly endeavor to please Him. The youngest child knows this. If your young child means to please you and then you find fault with it, it feels that it is wronged. It is grieved and regards you as tyrannical and unjust. Sometimes parents will require something of a child. The child attempts to please, but by mishap, breaks something. It was perhaps hastening with rapid step, to fulfill some command, to meet the wishes of a parent, but he slipped; something happened that he failed to secure the end intended. In such cases it is always cruel to even give a look of disapprobation. The child in every instance feels that it is unjust. The child has a conscience, and it knows that when it honestly endeavors to please, it ought to be accepted. And parents, or guardians, or masters, commit a great error, or a great sin, when

they frown upon an honest endeavor, although it may have proved a failure. God never does this. He is never displeased with an honest endeavor. He never upbraids for any mistake that was so incidental as not at all to impair the integrity and honesty of the endeavor. If the intention was right, if the endeavor was honest, if the soul truly designed to meet His whole will, His will is met. There is no possibility in such a case of His being displeased.

- 3. We can please God without the least real sacrifice of good to ourselves. I mean that it is always more profitable to us to please Him, cost us what it may, than it is to displease Him. It were even better to go to the martyr's stake, and have our flesh burned off from us in the flames, than to refuse to go, should He call us to the sacrifice. Happiness belongs to the mind and not to the body. Happiness might be complete, even were the body consuming in the flames. And which, think you, would be the greatest good or evil to us, to stand in the will of God in the midst of consuming flames, or to rebel against God and suffer our bodies to repose on beds of roses? The bed of roses could not make us happy, if God were displeased with us. Heaven itself could be no pleasure to us. There is always a relish, a peace, a sweetness in walking with singleness of eye to God's good pleasure. But break away from this and aim at pleasing any other, and real happiness is impossible.

IV. Do any of you ask, How can I intend to please Him?

I answer --

- 1. What is implied in this question? Suppose you should ask, how you should intend to please your mother, your father, or your benefactor. It is easy to see that the question implies that you do not love God; that His goodness to you has not led you to repentance. What! do you really find it difficult to mean to please Him? Then how totally unfit for heaven are you! Why, what would heaven be to you if it is so difficult for you to please God? You have no pleasure in pleasing God, no care to please God, no delight in pleasing God! Then hell must be your home. What would such a spirit do in heaven!
- 2. Would it really afford you no pleasure to please Him? Do you really care nothing whether you please or displease God? How is this? Suppose you should meet the Lord, and you knew that it was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, and suppose He should ask you if you would do Him a favor, would you decline? Would you consider it no honor, no pleasure to please Him? Suppose the Lord Jesus Christ should write you a letter, and should ask you if you were willing to do a given thing for Him; should remind you of who He is and what He has done for you; and should tell you withal that that letter was written in the blood shed for you on Calvary, and then ask you if you would not deny yourself for His sake, if you would not go and preach His Gospel. Suppose He was to send to you a revelation from heaven to some part of the world, in which He should reveal some great truth essential to their salvation, and should ask you to go and carry that book and revelation, to leave your home and friends and go on such an errand for Him, what would you say? Would you consider it no honor to go? Would you say, no, I cannot afford it, I care not for Thee. What have I to do to please Thee?

When in England, I was struck with the fact that everybody considered it such an honor

to have an opportunity in any way to oblige the queen. Now, suppose that you were in London, in Hyde Park, and the queen was riding through the Park, and her postillion should stop, and the queen should call you to her carriage and ask you if you would do her the favor to put a letter in the post-office for her. Now, if you were one of her subjects, would you not consider it a great favor to do this for her? Would you not care to please her? Would it not almost draw from your eyes tears of joy to be able to do anything which should meet her wishes? Why, her officers and her soldiers can march in the face of death to gain her approbation. They will run any risk, and make any sacrifice, and account it all joy to do so, to please the queen.

Now you are made with a love of approbation. Have you no desire to please the great and the good? If a subject of Victoria can joyfully hazard his life, make any sacrifice to please the queen, and even in the agonies of death, feel that he is rewarded if he has met the queen's approbation, have you no care to please God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Why, suppose you should meet the Lord Jesus Christ, and He should show you His hands and His feet, should remind you of His bloody sweat, of His shameful death, of all He had done and suffered for you, and then should ask if you had no care to make any grateful returns to Him, no care to please Him, no fear of displeasing Him -- what would you say? Would you ask, How can I care to please Thee? Why, what would be said in heaven to such a state of mind as this? Just let Him signify to the hosts of heaven a wish -- let Him inquire, "Whom shall I send? and who will go for Me?" ten thousand voices are raised at once, "Here am I; send me." And if there be any controversy, it is who shall be allowed to do His will -- which shall be allowed to do the most to please Him. All the ambition there is to lay themselves out to the uttermost, to see which shall do most to meet His blessed will.

What if it should be inquired in heaven, as you inquire, How can I care to please Him? Why, there the anxiety is all the other way -- How can I help caring to please Him? I must please Him; I will please Him; I would rather die than displease Him, is the language of all His real friends.

But is His love in fact to you no prevailing motive to seek His pleasure? Has all that He has done for you fallen so far short of winning your heart that after all you coldly inquire how you can intend and care to please Him? If this is your case, you are in fact far enough from being saved.

REMARKS.

1. From this subject it is easy to see what true religion is. When I was young, I do not recollect ever to have heard a sermon from which I could gather what true religion was. I used to say, What is it? I used to ponder what Christianity meant by the language they used. I could not understand it. For a long time the impression was on my mind that religion was purely a feeling; that it was something that was to come to us, and no deliberate intention or act of my own. I thought it an unintelligible matter. But here see what it is. It is one of the most intelligible of all things. Just contrast it with sin.

Take the case of Adam and Eve. For a time they dressed God's garden, and kept it. They were devoted to pleasing Him. And doubtless the lovely Eve, with her delicate hands, was pruning and cultivating in a most tasteful manner, the shrubbery and flowers in the garden of God. She and her husband took delight in this. As yet they knew no other way than to meet God's pleasure in everything.

When He visited His garden, and commended their diligence, and commended their taste, and expressed a pleasure in the appearance of His garden, it no doubt filled their minds with inexpressible delight. They meant to please Him; they did please Him. Their hearts were set upon meeting His wishes, and when they did they were satisfied. But in an evil hour they fell. The tempter suggested that they could please themselves, though at the expense of displeasing and disobeying God. They consented, and made their own pleasure their supreme end. In this they sinned; they fell. And this has been the sin of man, living to please himself instead of living and walking to please God.

2. Now see what it is to become a Christian. Suppose that when Adam and Eve had fallen, when they heard the voice walking in the garden, instead of hiding among the trees, they had immediately come forward, and Eve had broken down before the Lord, confessed her sins, and begged to be restored, and allowed to keep the garden.

If she and Adam had returned with all their heart, with the simplicity of aim that they had before to please the Lord -- this would have been repentance, this would have been a change of heart. They changed their hearts when they turned away for pleasing God, and set up their own pleasure as their end. In this they changed their hearts from a holy to a sinful heart.

Now had they immediately returned, changed back again, renounced their wrong, and devoted themselves at once to pleasing God again, this would have been conversion to God. In this they would have become truly religious again.

3. You see what is a truly religious life. That is a truly religious life which is a continual offering to God; and where in all our ways we intend to please Him. There are many who think they live a religious life, and after all seem to be doing many things they cannot pretend to be doing for God. You see them in many places, engaged in many employments; and if you should ask them, why are you here? what do you here? they could not tell you that God sent them there -- they could not tell you that they are doing this for God.

They might, as many do ask you, Why, what harm is there in it? Is there any harm in my being here? Is there any harm in my doing this or that? Now, the very asking of such a question, shows that the person is not truly religious. A great many people are living to please themselves, and doing what they do for their own pleasure, and are merely asking, What harm is there in it?

Why, God's commandments are positive and not negative. He commands that whatever we do, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God;" we do all to glorify and please Him. The question is not, therefore, in any given act or course of action, what harm it will do, but, will it do any good? The question is not, Does God forbid it? but, Does He require it?

It is common, I find, among professors of religion, to go hither and thither merely to please

themselves, to take journeys, to purchase articles, and in short, to pursue a self-pleasing course of life, and really make their own pleasure their end. And yet they profess to be consecrated to God, they profess to be Christians. Expostulate with them for this or that act or course of action, for this or that expenditure of money, for this or that use of their time, and you will receive for answer immediately, "Why, what harm is there in it? what hurt will it do?" Now this question always indicates a delusion in the mind of the professor of religion who makes it. It shows that he has no positive religion, but only a negative religion. He is contenting himself with doing no harm, as he says. He is using his time, his influence, his possessions, really to please himself, because he cannot see any harm that will result from what he is doing. But this is not the religion of Jesus. The inquiry with a true Christian is, What wilt Thou have me to do? Will this or that course of action please Christ? Will it promote His honor and glory? Will it win a soul? Will it help forward the kingdom of God?

The question is not what harm a thing will do, but what good it will do? The question is not, whether a thing, this or that, is objectively right or wrong, but what is the subjective intention. What do I mean or intend in what I do? Objectively, it is right to go to meeting; but subjectively, it is wrong, unless I mean to please God thereby.

Objectively, that is, in the letter, many courses of conduct are right; but they are wrong subjectively, that is they are sinful in any case in which the intention is not to please God. According to the letter, it is right to pray; that is, the outward act has no wrong in it. But if I do not mean thereby to please God, it is wrong in me.

So with everything wise. If a man asks me what harm there is in what he is doing, I answer, it is all harm or wrong in you, unless you mean therein to please God. Here is a person who gives himself to the study of music. He asks me, Is it not right to cultivate the fine arts? is it not right to study painting? is it not right to study music? What harm is there in it? what harm will it do? I answer, there may be no harm in it, it may do no hurt, but the question returns, what do you mean by it? what do you intend by it? In you it is all wrong, and all harm, unless you mean thereby to please the Lord and to serve Him; unless you do it because you suppose that He requires it of you.

Many people seem to go no farther than this: they will do what will please themselves, and take it for granted that God does not object to it. They do not suppose that He wants them to do it; they do not do it because it is His pleasure, and because they regard it as His pleasure that they should do it. This they cannot believe. But it is their pleasure to do it; and they do it to please themselves, God not objecting, as they think. They never think of rising any higher than to avoid that which they think will displease God. But, positively, they never think of doing whatever they do because they mean to please Him.

Now in all this negative religion there is not one particle of acceptable service rendered to God. There is nothing in it but self-pleasing after all. It is only a modified form of selfishness. It is just that kind of philosophy that teaches that men are to seek their own interest and their own pleasure as an end; but in so doing, not to interfere with the rights of others. They do not care to please God, but to please themselves. But they hold that in pleasing themselves they should not displease God. But the fact is, they always do displease God unless they positively mean to please Him. His requirements are positive, that we should live and walk so as to please Him; that is designing to please Him, making

this our supreme and ultimate end in all that we do.

Now this religion that inquires, what harm will this do, and what harm will that do, instead of inquiring how to please God, and doing it for the purpose of pleasing Him -- I say the religion that seeks to please self and not God, that asks what harm will a thing do, instead of what good will it do, is not the religion of Jesus. It is not supreme love to God and equal love to man. It is the supreme love of self; it is selfishness under a religious type; it is a delusion, and an abomination to God.

But I fear it is after all the religion of the vast majority of professors. Many seem seldom or never to be aggressive in their religion. They are not laying themselves out, sacrificing self to please God; but they are living to please themselves, and as far as is consistent with this supreme regard to self, they avoid displeasing God. But in fact it is all displeasing to God. I say again, the religion of Jesus is positive, is necessarily aggressive. It is not merely the avoiding what there is harm in; but it is a positive labor, and a constant endeavor to please Christ, to do that which will glorify Him and save souls.

The enquiry, therefore, must be made, Wherefore do I do this? A proposition is before me to do this or that. Now the true enquiry universally is, not what harm will it do, but why should I do it? Does Christ want me to do it? Will it please God? Is it His good pleasure that I should do it? I am invited to a party: here the true question is not, What harm it will do for me to go there? but, what good can I do there?

The question is not, will the Lord object to my going; but does He wish me to go? The question is not whether I can barely get His consent; but is it His positive wish that I should go, and will He be pleased with it?

We sometimes see children set their hearts upon going somewhere, and their parents dislike to have them go, and yet they do not like absolutely to refuse. They dislike to say no because other young people are going. The children are very anxious to go to please themselves. The parents do not think it is wise; they would greatly prefer that their children should not go, but upon the whole they reluctantly consent. They do not like to restrain them too much. Now the children go, knowing at the same time that their parents would have preferred that they should not go, that they gain but the reluctant consent of their parents to go. They know their parents would have been much better pleased if they had cheerfully and willingly remained at home.

Now a great many professors of religion treat God just in this way; with this difference, however, that God has not given His consent. They go, in fact, without His consent. They cannot believe that God really wants them to go. They do not go because they think that God desired them to go. The deep impression is on their minds after all, that in going they have not the consent of their heavenly Father. Yet they are set upon pleasing themselves. So they will; and their determination to go is almost always prefaced by the question, Why, what harm is there in it, after all? What can there be wrong about it? What evil will it do? And then they think, why ministers do so -- minister's children do so -- everybody's going, why what harm is there in it? And thus they go with the multitude, to serve themselves.

Now this is nothing but real disobedience to God. There is no religion in any such course of conduct as this in any case whatever. And I am really afraid that after all this is the religion of great multitudes, to avoid doing harm while at the same time they aim at supremely pleasing themselves.

4. Religion greatly simplifies the aims of life. When once the whole being is consecrated to God there is really but one great question to ask -- Will this please God? The question is not whether it will please this one or that one. We are then disentangled from the meshes of worldly influence and the fear of man, and can act with simplicity, with singleness of aim. Instead of continually troubling ourselves with what this one or that one will think, what this or that one wishes us to do, how this or that will please or displease man, we have only one question to ask -- Will it please God? And this question is generally very easily answered. In almost everything the way is so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein.

Apply this to various kinds of business. Who, for example, would engage in selling tobacco as a business, intending thereby to please God? Who would engage in dealing in intoxicating drink, intending thereby to please God? Who would get up theatres, intending thereby to please God? Who would attend them, and spend their time and money, intending thereby to please God? Who would buy slaves, intending thereby to please God? Who, in short, would engage in very many branches of business, intending thereby to please God? No one, surely; for everybody knows that God would not call upon any man to engage in such business and to do such things.

5. Many persons profess to consecrate all to God. This they will do at the communion table; this they will kneel down solemnly and profess to do in the house of God, in their closets, or at the family altar; and then immediately go away, and go right to pleasing themselves, and pursue their own plans of self-gratification just as they did before. Practically, they have made no change whatever in their lives. They go right away and carry out all the schemes of self-pleasing upon which they had settled.

Here is a person who has promised at the communion table to live wholly to please the Lord. The next day I find him starting off on an excursion of pleasure, or in pursuit of some selfish object. I ask him, How is this? have you got the mind and will of God in this? and has He required this at your hands?

He will reply, I had calculated upon this course, had laid my plans for this for some time past; I thought I might as well execute it now as at any future time. I reply: so you did not mean anything yesterday when you swore at the table of the Lord to do all for His glory and to aim in all things at pleasing Him. Practically, then, you have made no change in your self-pleasing arrangements. You purpose still to carry out all your plans for self-gratification. Here you are deliberately pursuing all the plans that you had laid to please yourself, and this is your religion! This is all you intended by your consecration! This is what you meant when you swore with the elements of Christ's broken body and shed blood in your hands, that you would not live to please yourself, but would live wholly to please God! Yesterday was Sabbath -- you swore solemnly to live every day of your future life wholly to please the Lord. But today you are executing your projects of self-pleasing. Tomorrow you have something else planned for pleasing yourself; and the next day, and the next; and so you deceive yourself. Today I meet you here. I ask, Brother, how came you here? Your answer amounts to this, I came here to please myself. But you ask, what harm is there in it? I answer, in you, there is infinite harm in it, for you don't mean to please God. And thus you think you are religious, and go about what

you call a religious life; but with the supreme intention of pleasing yourself. After all, how little real, honest, consecration to God there seems to be.

But after all we can well afford to live to please God; for the more singly we aim at pleasing Him, the more truly and surely do we really please ourselves. We do not aim in this to please ourselves; but, notwithstanding, we do gain our own approbation. We aim at pleasing God, and not man. We therefore care comparatively little what man thinks of what we do; if God approve, it is enough. The soul is quiet under that consideration, is peaceful and calm as a summer-evening sea. It becomes crucified unto the world and the world unto it; it pleases God; it is adjusted to His will; it meets His pleasure. He smiles His approbation, and all is peace.

Wherefore Do The Wicked Live

Lecture IV

February 13, 1861

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Job 21:7; first clause of the verse: "Wherefore do the wicked live?"

Job's three friends seem to have been of the opinion that this, the present state of the existence, is a state of rewards and punishments; and that therefore a man's character might infallibly be known by God's dealings with him. Hence they interpreted the dealings of God with Job in his affliction as conclusive proof that he was not what he professed to be. They accused him of hypocrisy and exhorted him to repentance. They insisted that God does not afflict men except for their sins; and that their afflictions, or the discipline under which they pass, are to be regarded as punishment, and therefore Job must be a wicked man. Job denied this, and maintained that this is a state of probation. He argued at length that nothing certain could be known of a man's character by the providential dealings of God with him in this state of existence. This chapter is a part of Job's vindication of this doctrine. In this text he asks them to account for the fact that the wicked do live, and grow rich, and are mighty in power. In his argument he insists that they are often prospered in this world, and even pass through less trial and affliction than many of the godly do. How then, he insists, can you maintain the doctrine, that God deals with men according to their characters in this life?

In discoursing upon this subject I propose to enquire,

I. Who are wicked?

II. Why do the wicked live?

I. Who are wicked?

Answer: All who know, but do not do their duty, are wicked.

- 1. God's law and government are positive, and require supreme love to God and equal love to man, with all the appropriate expressions of this love in all the relations of life. To neglect to render this love and its fruits; in other words, to neglect to do one's duty, is disobedience; it is to refuse to fulfill any obligation to God or man. Nothing is good in God's sight but love and its fruits. To withhold these, is to withhold the whole of duty; it is to violate the whole law; it is to set aside all moral obligation; it is to condemn divine authority; it is to trample on all the divine rights; it is to reject the rights of all those whom we ought to love, and to set up our own will and our own way, and our own pleasure, as supreme.
- 2. Let it be understood, then, that the true definition of a wicked man is one who knows but does not do his duty. This is the essence of wickedness. And it should be said that neglect to do duty is always a refusal to do it; for it is impossible to know our duty and to be indifferent with respect to it. We cannot remain passive in the presence of revealed obligation. In such a case the will must act. Man is a free agent; but his freedom does not imply that in the presence of obligation, he can remain entirely passive, acting neither one way nor the other. His freedom consists precisely in this, that, in the presence of obligation, he can universally act as a sovereign, the one way or the other, can comply with obligation or refuse to do so. Neglect to obey is therefore always refusal to obey. He therefore who knows but does not do his duty, withholds from God and man their due, and is a wicked man.

II. We come to answer the enquiry, Why do the wicked live?

God is benevolent, He is love, and always has and must have some good and sufficient reasons for all that He does or omits. He is never arbitrary or capricious in anything that He does or declines to do. Therefore there must be benevolent reasons for the existence of the wicked.

In answering this question it will not be expected that all the reasons that actuated the divine mind are known to us, or can be stated in a sermon. There are, however, revealed in various ways, many reasons why the wicked live.

I shall divide these, and remark upon them, under three heads.

1. Notice some reasons that respect God Himself.
 2. Some reasons that respect His people.
 3. Some reasons that respect the wicked themselves.
- 1. I am to notice some reasons that respect God.
 - (1.) He created them for Himself. When I say that He created them for Himself, I do not mean that He created them wicked. Wickedness is always a voluntary act, or state of mind. It is not and cannot be the subject of creation, as bodies and souls are created. It is

a sheer absurdity to suppose that a being could be created wicked. This would confound all ideas of wickedness. A being can be created who shall by his own act become wicked; but no being in the universe can make him wicked but himself. Wickedness is always a violation of moral obligation, therefore no one being can be the author of another's wickedness. God therefore did not create men wicked. He created them moral beings; they become wicked by their own voluntary choice.

- o (2.) God no doubt created the wicked or those who become wicked, because their creation was essential; in His judgment, to the promotion of the highest universal good. Not that their wickedness was essential to the promotion of the highest good, but their existence was essential, and that, too, notwithstanding God foresaw that they would be wicked; since He at the same time foresaw that He could so over-rule their wickedness and make such use of their existence as to promote the highest universal good, that is, the highest good of the whole universe taken together.
- o (3.) He created the wicked as objects of regard, that He might have them to care for -- even after they became wicked, that He might care for them notwithstanding. He wanted objects of affectionate regard; a family to take care of, to exercise His natural and moral attributes, to busy Himself with their nurture, and with providential arrangements to promote their good. He did not desire to live alone; the infinite overflowings of the riches of His own mind sought objects to nurse and take care of, and make holy and happy. He spares them since He has created them and they have become wicked. They continue to live, not because they deserve to live, but still to exercise His natural and His moral attributes. Notwithstanding that they have become wicked He loves them still. He has harbored no feelings of resentment or revenge.

He is infinitely generous, and rises above the faults of His creatures, and is infinitely willing to forgive and bless them still; and if He can reclaim the wicked, is infinitely willing and ready to save them. They have become wicked, but He pities them. He knows very well that they cannot endure His displeasure. He is long-suffering, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He has no pleasure in their death. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." He cannot take pleasure in the misery and destruction of any of His creatures. If the wicked persist in wickedness, He will have pleasure in the execution of justice, in the vindication of authority and law; but in the misery of His creature He can have no pleasure.

- o (4.) It is a trial to Him to destroy them. This must be if He loves them. Parents find it a great trial to banish their children, although they are sometimes obliged to do so. And if it is a trial to us who are evil to banish our children when they become incorrigibly wicked, how much more must it grieve the heart of God.
- o (5.) He can benevolently suffer them; and as long as He can do this He no doubt will suffer them. He cares for the whole of His creatures, and cannot consistently spare guilty individuals at the expense of the higher public good. It were neither wise nor benevolent

in Him to spare the wicked when to do so is no longer consistent with the highest good of the public at large, the society in which they dwell. He must not spare those who deserve to be banished, nor suffer them to live, to be only an injury and a curse to the innocent.

But the fact that God does spare the wicked is evidence that thus far He sees that He can benevolently and wisely let them live; He therefore preserves their lives. But you who are wicked should know that whenever you come into a relation to God and society in which it is no longer benevolent in Him to let you live, in which to spare you longer would be upon the whole an injury to the innocent or virtuous; He will then spare you no longer; He will put you out of their way; He will wipe the nuisance from the face of the earth.

- (6.) He preserves the lives of the wicked that He may set a good example to His creatures. He wishes to reveal Himself as a God of love, of compassion, of long suffering, as one "slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, for giving iniquity, transgression and sin;" but He will also, in due time, show that He "will by no means clear the guilty."

He wishes to set an example of good-will to enemies; of self-sacrifice for enemies; of pains taking for enemies; of forbearance; patience; long-suffering. He wishes to show His people for their good, and to show the wicked also for their good, what kind of a being He is, what spirit and temper are in Him, how unselfish He is, how slow to anger, how preserving He can be in bestowing favors on those that requite Him with disobedience and opposition.

- (7.) He wishes to confer all the good He wisely can on the wicked. He is infinitely rich, an eternally over-flowing fountain of riches and He wishes to make even the wicked the recipients of all the favors that He wisely can. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. He loves to see the wicked enjoy His favors. "He opens His hand and supplies the wants of every living thing." All creatures, wicked and all, return to Him; and each receives "his portion of meat in due season."

He watches over the wicked when they sleep, and loves to see them calm and quiet in sleep. He wakes them in the morning and feeds them, and Himself enjoys their repast. All the day He fans their heaving lungs, and although they breathe out their breath in opposition to Him, still He follows them from place to place, watches over them to do them good, protects them from harm, and in ten thousand ways repeats His acts of kindness and care, while they regard Him only with contempt.

But all this He does, and will do, because He is love. He can have patience with them and can forbear; can do them good and not evil as long as is consistent with the highest good of His kingdom at large. The fact that in His

wisdom He can over-rule your sins thus far, and in some way make good account of your lives, is the reason why you still live.

- o (8.) The wicked live because God wishes to realize in facts His own ideal of goodness in His treatment of them.

To the righteous He cannot in fact realize all the refinements of goodness. To treat the righteous and well-deserving with kindness, is good; but to treat the wicked with kindness, to render good for evil, blessing for cursing, is a still more refined form of goodness. In His treatment of the wicked in this world, He has an opportunity to exhibit all men some of the most delicate and exquisite forms of goodness of which we can form any conception. Justice is goodness, treating individuals as they deserve. But to treat them better than they deserve, nay, the opposite of their deserts, is a still more refined form of goodness. To love our friends is well; to love our enemies is better. To deny ourselves, to be at great pains-taking, to incur great expense, to do our enemies good; to hear and forbear, and sacrifice self, and be at great expense and suffering for the sake of doing good to enemies, is to exhibit forms of goodness almost too refined for our gross conceptions.

- o (9.) God spares the wicked to secure the respect and confidence of the universe. This He does not do selfishly. He knows that the good of the universe depends on their having confidence in Him, and respect and affection for Him. He knows that He cannot save the universe unless they will consent to be governed by Him. His government is moral, and not a government of force; He must therefore secure the admiration, applause, confidence, affection, and obedience of His subjects, or He cannot save them. Now in His treatment of the wicked He knows very well that He shall commend Himself to the admiration, affection, and confidence of all His intelligent subjects, thus strengthening His influence over them, and binding their hearts to His throne and government.
- o (10.) He spares the wicked to glorify Himself in their destruction, if it comes to that, that He must destroy them.

To execute wholesome law is always just, of course; but justice is all the more honored and glorified when the subject punished has not only violated law but has contemned the law giver, and contemned the offer of mercy. If the rebellious subject has been treated with the greatest kindness and forbearance; if much pains has been taken with him to reclaim and save him; if the government has exhausted all its available resources to do him good, to conciliate him, to humble and reclaim him, and has failed to do so, then justice is rendered all the more sacred in its execution. When the penalty of the law falls upon such a subject it makes a deep impression; the subjects of the government feel that that is done which was demanded. Justice is glorified, law is honored, authority established, iniquity rebuked, order preserved.

- 2. I must notice some reasons that respect His people.

- (1.) He spares the wicked to provide benevolent employment for His people.

He has stationed the wicked providentially throughout the whole regions and domains of the church. They have in their midst persons unsaved, persons who will not obey God, who are in the way to hell. Now to save these is the very work which the church needs. To sympathize with Christ in taking hold of this work, is one of the ways in which God sanctifies His people, and fits them for heaven.

- (2.) He spares the wicked to exercise and develop the graces of His people, to promote their self-denial to try and develop their patience, to lead them in all things to be like the Savior.
- (3.) He wishes to prove the sincerity of His people, to prove to themselves and others that they do really love the souls of men, that they are God's sincere friends, that they are the sincere friends of humanity.
- (4.) He wishes to prove the insincerity of the self-deceived, or of mere pretenders to religion. Some there are who profess to be God's friends, and the friends of man, who are not really so. By placing these in the midst of the wicked, He demonstrates their insincerity, shows that they are not what they profess to be, the friends of God, but that they sympathize with the world and go with the multitude to do evil. Thus, on the one hand, He wishes, by suffering the wicked to live, to prove to all around that His people will sympathize with Him and not with the wicked; and on the other, that false professors will sympathize with the world and not with Him.
- (5.) He spares the wicked as subjects of prayer, that He may multiply occasions that shall draw His people to commune with Him. He loves His children; He loves to see them deeply affected with the state of the wicked; He loves their sympathy in this respect; He wishes to secure as much communion with His children as He can for their good. He therefore places them in circumstances where the state of the wicked around them shall multiply occasions of their coming to commune with Him and ask favors of Him for the wicked. He loves to grant them favors for the wicked; He loves to see His children interest themselves in the happiness and well-being of sinners, and is well-pleased when they come with their petitions and requests for those who have deserved no favors, and who are yet needy.
- (6.) He spares the wicked to excite the compassion of His people, to break up their sensibility, to make their feelings mellow and tender.
- (7.) He spares the wicked that their wickedness may be seen by His people, and that they may learn more and more to hate and abhor iniquity. This is in fact the result of their living in the presence of sinners, that their righteous souls are vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked every day. They see more and more the hatefulness of sin, its

inexcusableness, its abomination, and thus the very hatefulness of sin, when viewed by His people makes them better.

Thus He spares the wicked to make them and their wickedness useful to His people.

- o (8.) Many of the wicked are so related to His own people as to be useful to them in many ways. Ungodly men are married to pious women; ungodly parents sometimes have pious children; pious parents sometimes have ungodly children. The wicked and the righteous, in the relations of this life, are so inter-located that it is impossible to destroy all the wicked without doing a great evil to His own people. It is often the case that they are spared that God may win the hearts of generations that shall proceed from them, and thus may gather from their descendants a seed to serve Him. He often spares the wicked to provide the means of temporal support for His own people. The Bible says, "The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just."

Wicked men often succeed in business, and accumulate a great deal of wealth, which will eventually be disposed of for the promotion of religion. Now wicked men mean no such thing. They do not accumulate property for the sake of promoting God's cause. They do not support God's children because they are God's children, but because of their particular relations to them. The unconverted husband does not support his pious wife because she is God's child but because she is his wife. Nevertheless God over-rules many things that the wicked do to support His own cause to benefit His own people. He makes them in many ways useful to the church; although they mean no such thing, yet so He uses them, and so He will use them.

- o (9.) He spares the wicked because His people love them. They love them oftentimes partly because of their relations to those who are His people. Some of them are their husbands, wives, parents, children, neighbors, friends. But they also love them with a love of benevolence, with a sacred regard for their good.

His people therefore dread to see them die in their sins; and because He dislikes to pain His own people by cutting off these wicked persons, He spares them as long as He wisely can.

- o (10.) He spares them because His people pity and pray for them. He no doubt keeps the wicked alive very often a long time because His people continue to cry to Him not to cut them off, but to spare them a little longer, and a little longer, till they shall dig about them and see if they will not bring forth fruit.

It sometimes happens, no doubt, that the wicked are cut off in answer to the prayer of God's people, but it is not because they pray for their destruction. But when they pray for things that cannot be granted without removing the wicked, God, no doubt, in answer to prayer, removes the wicked out of the way; not because His people prayed for their destruction, but because they prayed for the things that could not be granted without their destruction.

- (11.) He dislikes to grieve His people. Indeed He does not willingly grieve or afflict any of the children of men and especially is this true of His own people. He will, therefore, from regard to His own people, spare their unconverted neighbors and friends as long as He wisely can. Many a Christian, from mere natural affection, clings to his earthly relatives and friends notwithstanding they are wicked; and it would sadly grieve him to see them cut off and sent to hell. God pities His people, and out of regard to their feelings will spare these unconverted ones as long as He can.
- (12.) He wishes to spare the ungodly until His people have made so much effort to save them, that they have themselves become convinced that they are incorrigible. He wishes His people to know this, that they may be all the better reconciled to their destruction when He destroys them. He wants to prove even to His own people that the wicked are incorrigible, that their friends may see that to have spared their wicked relatives and wicked neighbors any longer would not have resulted in their conversion.
- 3. I will now mention some reasons that respect the wicked themselves.
 - (1.) God wishes to convince them of His sincere regard for them; to make them see and feel that He loves them still, and is trying to save them.
 - (2.) He wishes to convince them in such a manner as if possible to shame them out of their wickedness, that the exhibition of His goodness may lead them to repentance. He wishes thus, if possible, to constrain them to break off from their sins by righteousness, and to turn to God.
 - (3.) He wishes to make them realize their obligation. He gives them therefore plenty of time to reflect, to consider; He meets them at every turn with kindness; He bears with them and perseveres in showing them favors, if by any means He may win their confidence, their heart, and their souls to salvation.
 - (4.) At any rate, He intends to leave them without excuse. He thus tries to remove their prejudices against Himself and against His people; to subdue their unbelief, and constrain them, if possible, to have confidence in Him, and to realize His true regard for them. He wishes to subdue their enmity, to overcome their obstinacy, to soften their hearts and gain them for their salvation.

I conclude this discourse by a few questions and remarks addressed, first, to Christians; and secondly, to the wicked themselves.

First -- To Christians.

My brethren and sisters, what influence, as a matter of fact, has the preservation of the wicked had upon you?

- (1.) Have their lives been useful to you? Is it a fact that residing in their midst, and having them before your faces as objects of benevolent regard has made you better, more

watchful, more humble, more holy, more self-denying? Has their living among you made you more prayerful, more self-sacrificing, more patient, more forbearing and long-suffering? Has it made you more pitiful, more charitable; has it led you to love your enemies? Here you live in the midst of those who have not been your true friends, if you are God's friends. But have you loved them notwithstanding? Have you returned blessing for cursing, kind words for railing and accusation? Have you persisted in doing them good with all lowliness of mind, however they have treated you?

(2.) Has their living in the midst of you made you more watchful over your tongue, over your life, over your spirit, and in all your ways?

(3.) Has their living in the midst of you made you more heavenly minded and Christ-like? Has it shown you more and more how little the world can do for men; and more and more the value of religion? Has it led you to hate sin? Has it made you firm and bold in kindly rebuking it?

Now that these effects should result from their living in the midst of you, is plainly the design of God in sparing the wicked; and if you are truly God's friends, these effects must have followed with you.

(4.) Has the presence of the wicked in your midst led you to stand up more thoroughly, and openly, and steadily, for Jesus, and take His part in the midst of a gain-saying world? Have you been faithful to Jesus in the presence of His enemies, and in your treatment of them?

(5.) Have you been faithful to the wicked themselves? and are you ready to die, and to have them die and to meet them in the judgment? Are you clear of their blood, so that when you meet them before God you shall be able to say, " O lord, I am clear of the blood of all these souls. I did what I could to save them, Thou knowest. I lived before them as much like Jesus as was possible. I prayed for them, I wept over them, I admonished them, I warned and entreated them, I besought them by all that was sacred in heaven and in earth to turn to Thee; but they would not. I give my testimony against them, and consent that they should give their testimony against me. I am clear of their blood."

(6.) Have any of them anything against you? Have you wronged any of them? Have you given them any occasion to think that you have? Have you stumbled any of them? Have you neglected their souls? Have you been selfish in your dealings with them? Have you manifested a bad spirit towards them? Have you spoken against them, unkindly, in an unchristian manner? Have you even published their faults unnecessarily, and in an unchristian spirit? How then can you meet them in the judgment?

Have you neglected to pray for them? Ah! have you gone with them in worldly ways and in a worldly spirit? How then are you prepared either to die yourself, or to have them die?

(7.) Have you set a good example before them, and rightly represented Christ and His religion? Has your life, your temper and spirit, been such as to lead them to understand the true nature of Christ's religion? Have they gotten from you the true idea of what Christianity is; that it is love; that it is love to enemies as well as friends; that it is love universally; that it involves all the beauties of holiness and all the forms of real goodness? In seeing your example, and spirit and temper, and life, do you think that they have been irresistibly, favorably impressed with your religion?

Have they, by your good works, been constrained to glorify Christ? Or, on the other hand, have they been stumbled by you? Have you misrepresented Christ and His religion? Have you led them to loathe and abhor your profession of Christianity? Have you filled their mouth with cavils and objections against Christianity by your inconsistent life? Has your spirit and temper, your daily life and dealings with men repelled them and led them to infer irresistibly either that you are no Christian, or that Christianity is a nuisance? Have you so misrepresented Christ as that the wicked have no good opinion of Him or His religion?

(8.) Have any of the wicked died in sin through your neglect and fault? Can you remember any that you have stumbled; any in respect to whom you have failed in duty; any for whom you have not prayed, that are dead, gone to their account in their sins? How then will you meet them?

(9.) Have you stumbled any, and are you stumbling any that are now living? In short, are you now guilty, or have you been guilty of anything unchristian, in respect either to the dead or the living? Has the living of the wicked in your midst confirmed you and all around you, in the settled conviction that you are a Christian; that you are a friend of God; that you are truly a representative of Christ on earth?

Has their living in your midst proved your sincerity to God, or has it proved you a hypocrite, a false professor, a worldly professor? Now one of these two things has been accomplished by their living in the midst of you.

Have you seen that their presence was an influence that was working for your sanctification? Have you overcome the world; or has the world overcome you?

Have you drawn them towards Christ; or have they drawn you to the world? Are you today more prayerful, more heavenly-minded, more like Christ, for having lived in the midst of these subjects of prayer, and these objects of Christian compassion and effort? Or have you lived in the midst of God's enemies, in the midst of these subjects of prayer, and never acted, and lived, and prayed like a Christian? Then you are no Christian! Then the lives of the wicked have been the occasion of proving you a self-deceived professor. What think you would be the honest testimony of all your unconverted acquaintances if today they should be summoned with you to the solemn judgment? Would their real testimony be that you are a friend of God; that they believe it; that they have seen that in you which has proved it? Or would it turn out that you had been a stumbling block, a

nuisance in the midst of them?

Secondly -- I must ask some questions, and make some remarks to the wicked themselves.

(1.) What has your life done for you thus far? Your life is a fact. You are; you are here; you have passed thus far on in life. You must die. You are going to the solemn judgment. Your life has been a constant development in one direction or another. You have either been growing better or worse. You have been floating upon life's ocean; and which way have you been drifting? What is your reckoning? Where on this great stormy ocean are you? What is the bearing of this drifting of your soul?

How many years have you lived? and where are you now? and what has life done for you up to this point?

(2.) Is your life likely to be a blessing to you, or a curse? This is a question which you shall yourself decide. You will, you must make your own existence an eternal blessing or an eternal curse, as you take this course or that. But taking account of all that is passing, considering your present age, your surroundings, the drift you have made, taking into account your present position and the bearings of everything around you, what are your prospects? How great are the chances of your eternal salvation, or eternal damnation?

I asked you, How long have you lived? You are aware that the great majority of persons that are ever converted, are converted quite young; especially where persons live under the means of grace, they are converted early or become gospel-hardened. How has it been with you? Comparatively few persons are converted after they are forty years of age. By far the majority of converts are converted under twenty, in all ages of the world. Now how many years have you lived? Have you not already lived out half of your days, so far as all hope of your salvation is concerned? Have not many of you gone even already beyond the point where there is much likelihood that you will ever be converted?

(3.) How long do you expect to live? Some of you may live for years; and some of you may live but a few moments. But can you ask, with any honor or honesty, that you may live and be spared if you continue in your sins? Your sins are a great trial to God; they are a great nuisance in society. God may see cause to spare you notwithstanding your sins; but your sins are nevertheless a great abomination to Him, and a great abomination to His people. Now can you honestly pray to God, and ask Him to spare you that you may continue to mark your way all along with sins and rebellion against Him?

(4.) Will a longer life be a blessing or a curse to you? Judging from the past, have you not reason to fear that the longer you live the worse it will be for you? No doubt you hope to amend, and to break off from your wickedness; but is there really much prospect that you ever will? Is it not highly probable that you never will, but will wax worse and worse?

Now please reflect -- Have you more selfishness now than you had when you were young?

Are you more susceptible of religious impressions, or less susceptible? Have you more prejudice against Christian people than you used to have or have you less? Have you more attachment to the house and worship of God; or have you less? Have you fallen out from association with God's people, and fallen out from His worship, more and more, or less and less? Does the Spirit of God strive with you still, and even more than formerly; or has He almost, if not entirely, ceased to strive with you? Are the moral principles that you were taught in your childhood more potent to influence you now than formerly; or less so? In short, is life to you a hardening process, or is it a subduing and sanctifying process?

(5.) Why are you still neglecting the Savior? And have you not reason to believe that you shall always neglect Him, and that no length of days in this life will make you a Christian?

(6.) Where will you soon be? You cannot live long. Where shall you and I soon meet? We cannot meet here much longer. We must soon depart hence to be here no more; and the places that now know you and me will soon know us no more forever. Where then shall we be? Where will you be? What will be your employment when this life is ended? Can you not see that the answer to that question must turn upon the manner in which you spend this life? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." If you sow to the wind, you must reap the whirlwind. If you live to minister to your appetites and propensities, when the body is torn down, when the flesh is gone and sensual enjoyments are no more -- what then must you reap? If you have sown to the Spirit of God; if you have lived to please Him; if you have lived in the Spirit, and prayed in the Spirit, and walked in the Spirit, and communed in the Spirit -- then tear the body down and you have life everlasting. But mark again, I pray you, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." When you understand what life is doing for you, you need not be a prophet to decide what your eternal destiny must be. If you are prepared for heaven, to heaven you will go; if not prepared for heaven, you must have your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

(7.) Shall God spare you and love you and try to save you in vain? Will you perversely turn away; will you continue to rebel and be wicked until His forbearance can no longer spare you, and He is obliged to wipe you from the earth as a nuisance? What shall be said of you when you are dead? Shall it truly be said of you that you have lived, and sinned, and died in your sins; and then shall a cloud settle over you; -- shall the darkness of eternal night rest upon you forever?

Hardness Of Heart - No. 1

Lecture V

Harden Not Your Heart - No. 2

Lecture VI

Tender-Heartedness - No. 3

Lecture VII

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

LECTURE V.

March 13, 1861

HARDNESS OF HEART --No. 1

Text.--Mark 8: 17: "Have ye your heart yet hardened?"

Christ had just wrought the miracle of feeding the four thousand men with seven loaves. In teaching His disciples shortly after, He warned them to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." They did not understand Him, and supposed that He gave them the warning, because they had forgotten to take bread with them. Perceiving their blindness, He said: -- "Why reason ye because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes see ye not? and having care hear ye not? and do ye not remember?"

In speaking from these verses I inquire,

I. What is hardness of heart?

II. The effects and manifestations of hardness of heart.

I. What is hardness of heart?

Answer: -- The language is often used to designate an unfeeling state of the sensibility. But this is not the meaning of hardness of heart when it is spoken of as a crime, as a sin against God. When hardness of heart is spoken of as sin, the terms designate the committal of the will to a false position; a stubbornness in regard to the claims of God; an attitude of disobedience and self-will. In this sense we often use such language. When a child is stubborn, stands out against parental authority, we speak of him as hard-hearted, and as hardening his heart against the claims and authority of the parent.

II. Let us notice some of the effects and manifestations of hardness of heart.

- 1. A want of candor is one of its effects and manifestations. The will is committed in a dishonest attitude; consequently in this state the mind will manifest an uncandid spirit in regard to testimony. Hence it will be very hard to convince. It is difficult to carry conviction home to a mind, where the heart is hard. The will girds itself, and uses the intellect unfairly. It will evade

testimony; it will cavil; it will divert attention from the truth; it will resort to various shifts to avoid the conviction of error and wrong.

- 2. Prejudice is another of its effects and manifestations. Prejudice is pre-judgment. It is one-sided; the mind made up without the full examination of all sides of the question. The mind is ready, in this state, to leap to a conclusion that will in any way favor the false position it has taken. Where the heart is hard, there will be a general manifestation of prejudice on a great many questions. The attitude of the mind is so false, unjust, ungenerous, that it is not careful to weigh evidence, and to be just in its judgments; but, on the contrary, it will leap to conclusions, however unjust, and indulge various prejudices against persons, doctrines, communities -- and indeed such a mind will reveal itself as a nest of prejudices.
- 3. Another of its effects and manifestations will be the absence of tender and kindly feeling. Especially will this be so in regard to all persons and things that stand related to the false position that it has taken. Suppose the mind is committed to money-making. One of the effects and manifestations of this position of the will, will be an unfeelingness in dealing with men; a want of tender and kind feelings in regard to the poor and the suffering. If the heart is hard in respect to God, it will manifest a want of appreciation in regard to almost all its relations to Him. It will be unappreciative of the guilt of sin; it will not realize the nature of sin as consisting in the neglect of God, His rights, feelings, authority, well-being. While such a mind may admit that such neglect of God is sin; still the guilt of sin will not be realized, will not be felt. The confession that this neglect is sin, will be cold, heartless, emotionless.
- 4. When the heart is hard, the mind will manifest an inability to appreciate the necessity of an atonement; to honor God who has been dishonored by sin; and to honor the law that has been degraded by sin. When the heart is hard, the moral feelings are obtuse, and blunt, and often perverted. It cannot feel the dishonor of God and of the law that sin has occasioned; and it inquires coldly and recklessly, what need of a sin-offering to condemn sin and honor the law? The fact is, where the heart is hard, the moral feelings and perceptions are blunted; and consequently the great truths connected with the necessity of an atoning sacrifice are not appreciated.
- 5. When the heart is hard, the mind is unappreciative of ill-desert. It is slow even to admit that it deserves damnation; and if compelled to admit it as an intellectual judgment, the mind does not feel it, its not clearly and keenly realized. Such a one will say, "I cannot feel that it would be just in God to send me to hell. It seems hard that for the sins committed in this short life, God should punish me forever."
- 6. When the heart is hard, the mind also is unappreciative of the compassion and forbearance of God. Being in a great degree blind to the nature and guilt of sin, having no appropriate sense and feeling of guilt, the compassion of God in sparing such a soul will not be at all appreciated. Upon such a mind the forbearance of God makes little impression; it is not seen, realized, felt. The will is so stubborn, the intellect is so unfairly used, and the whole mind is held in such a position by the force of the will, that the feelings are very little affected in view of the compassion and forbearance of God.

- 7. While the heart is hard, the mind is unappreciative of the love of Christ. To such a mind this love is scarcely felt to be a reality. If it be admitted, it is not felt; it is not realized; the mind is not impressed and subdued by it. The fact is, the soul is in the attitude of rebellion; it is committed against the claims of Christ; it is girded to maintain its position of resistance to Christ and His authority. In this state the love of Christ is not so perceived, is not so realized, as to melt and subdue the soul.

Whenever the heart is hard, there is unbelief; and this unbelief in regard to the love of Christ, this withholding confidence in this love, this refusing to yield the mind up to its influence, prevents this love from overcoming and subduing the mind.

Persons whose hearts are hard, will complain that they are not affected by the love of Christ. They are often not aware that it is their voluntary stubbornness that prevents their being duly affected by it. They seem not to know that they are closing the windows of the soul that the love of Christ may not shine in and melt them.

They seem not to realize that they are holding their emotions all back, not allowing them to flow, not allowing their feelings to be aroused and quickened.

They will even in this case complain of the hardness of their own hearts, meaning by this their unfeelingness in view of the love of Christ; and in this they overlook the fact that they are the voluntary authors of this very unfeelingness, of which they complain.

- 8. While the heart is hard, the soul will not appreciate the guilt that is involved in neglecting to labor for the souls of others. Now, if a city were on fire, and one that knew it, should fail to give the alarm, and should see the city burn down and hundreds of souls perish, there would be a general outcry against such cruelty; people generally would be shocked, and even horrified at such wickedness.

But souls may be asleep in their sins, and thousands of them may perish unwarned, unreprieved, unprayed for, uncared for, and yet the guilt of all this neglect be scarcely realized or felt at all.

Now this is owing to the hardness of the heart, and the consequent unbelief and blindness of the soul. You talk to such people about their sins, and they say, "What have I done? Whom have I injured? I have wronged no man; I have paid all my debts; and I have done my duty to my neighbors and friends around me."

Now in all this the hardness of heart prevents the person from understanding really what his duty is. He satisfied himself with not having defrauded, or with not having otherwise positively injured his neighbor.

But the law of God is positive. His duty was to love his neighbor as himself; to make all possible effort to save the soul of his neighbor; to warn, reprove, persuade, and use all possible moral influence to arouse his neighbor to secure the salvation of his soul. All this

he has neglected, and perhaps has neglected many around him that are already dead, and have gone down to hell; and yet he does not feel that he has totally neglected his duty. His duty was to love his neighbor positively; to do his neighbor all the good he could; and especially, if possible, to save his soul. All that he can truly say, is, that he has abstained from directly and positively injuring his neighbor by his every-day acts; but to say that he has done his duty to his neighbor is absurd. He has performed no duty to his neighbor. His duty was to love, and to express this love in every way. This he has totally neglected; hence he has performed no duty to his neighbor, and no duty to God. But his heart is so hard that all this he does not feel, this he does not realize; and thus he is acting under a gross delusion, ruinous and damning, because his heart is so hard.

- 9. The same is true of directly neglecting God. When the heart is hard one of its effects and manifestations will be, God will be neglected; prayer will be neglected; praise will be neglected; obedience will be neglected; love will be withheld; confidence will be withheld; gratitude will be withheld; obedience from the heart will be withheld; and nothing will be present but cold formality and religious affectation, at the most. And yet this neglect will not be keenly felt as a sin against God; it will not be realized as deserving damnation. Such a soul is so hardened toward God that it cares not for His rights, or for His well-being in any respect. It can see Him dishonored without feeling it; it can hear His name even blasphemed without just and holy indignation; it can see His rights invaded, His authority spurned, His feelings outraged, His law trampled on and despised, and yet not feel it. The feelings are locked up as cold and dead as an Arctic ocean.

In short, when the heart is hard, there will be a general unfeelingness toward God. The thought of God does not melt the sensibility. Talk to such a soul of the justice of God, His abhorrence of sin, His righteous indignation, and you will hardly excite its fears. It girds itself, and scorns to be made afraid. But, turn the subject over, and represent His loving-kindness, slowness to anger, and readiness to forgive, His vast compassion, and spread out before such a soul all the tenderness there is in God's heart, and you will not arouse the feelings. Such a soul will still complain, "I do not feel, I know it- it is all true; but I cannot feel it."

- 10. Another effect and manifestation of hardness of heart is uncharitableness. Where the will is dishonestly committed against the claims of God, the mind is uncharitable in the sense of lacking confidence in God, and in everybody else.

You will almost always observe when the heart is hard that there is a censorious spirit, a disposition to find fault, to judge God and man censoriously. Such a mind can see little that is good in God or anybody else; it naturally dwells upon the dark side; is keen to discern the faults, real or supposed, of men; and prone to censure in God whatever it cannot understand.

- 11. Another manifestation of hardness of heart is a self-justifying spirit. If accused of wrong, such a mind will immediately fall to excuse-making. If it cannot deny the fact charged, it will immediately seek either wholly to justify, or to palliate and extenuate the guilt. If it has a controversy with another, it is blind to but one side of the question. And you will observe if two

persons, both of whose hearts are hard, have a controversy, you cannot get them to see alike. Each will justify himself and condemn the other; and try as you may, while their hearts are hard, each will think the other most in fault. Neither can see that he is the guilty party; and consequently the controversy will be perpetuated while their hearts are hard. Soften their hearts, and they will soon come together.

- 12. Hardness of heart will manifest itself in an unrelenting state of mind, even when convinced that it has injured another. In such cases the conviction will not be allowed to take such possession of the mind as to melt the sensibility and subdue the will. The confession of guilt in such cases will be tearless, feelingless, ungracious.
- 13. Hardness of heart manifests general spiritual blindness and self-deception. When the will is committed against the claims of God, it will of course admit as little light and conviction into the intelligence as possible. It will not candidly weigh evidence, it will not honestly consider the matter; and consequently, on all subjects relating to God and our relations to Him, a hard heart will produce great spiritual blindness and self-deception.

We sometimes see those whose hearts are so hard that they will tell you they always do right, they do their duty. They think they are getting along very well, and that God has but little cause to find fault with them. Nay, many of this class will profess to be Christians; and they really suppose they are, when it is as manifest to others as possible that they are blind, because of the hardness of their hearts. It is remarkable often to see how deep the delusion of such a mind is.

I have known some to profess to live even without sin, and think themselves in a state of sanctification, who after all were manifestly hardened, feelingless, exhibiting no real love to God or man, none of the tenderness and compassion of Christ, no spirit of concern for souls, nothing that was truly Christ-like or Christian. Their minds seemed to be as dark as the grave, and their hearts as hard as the nether mill-stone.

- 14. Another effect and manifestation of hardness of heart is a constant tendency to excuse all religious delinquency. If such persons neglect prayer, they have an excuse for it; if they neglect to warn and win souls, they have an excuse for it; if they neglect to do their part in the support of public worship, to sustain missions, to forward religion in any and every way, they have always an excuse for it. You will not see them tender, and manifesting great sorrow that they are deprived of the privilege or opportunity of doing these things. You cannot avoid discovering, often, that it is the spirit of excuse-making for religious delinquency; and that this spirit is the effect of hardness of heart and of that blindness of mind which we always see consequent upon it.
- 15. Selfishness in trade is another effect and manifestation of hardness of heart. You will always observe that such men are difficult to get along with. They are close and hard in their dealings, and will be sure to have the best end of a bargain. They have no such tenderness as will not allow them to do as they would not be done by. The golden rule is to them a blank. Their maxims are,

"Take care of number one;"

"Charity begins at home;"

"Let every man look out for himself;"

"My business is to make as good a bargain as I can."

These are the practical rules of trade.

Hence he can take little advantages of the poor; give them short measure, and short weight, and poor articles, and put them off as he may, making what he can out of them. He can see a poor man, or a poor woman, go from his counter or from his shop, with a sense of having been wronged and hardly dealt with, and not feel sorry for it. He can see the poor man go away with a few pennies less than was his due, and yet have no generous outburst of feeling that will call him back and deal generously, or even fairly with him. The fact is, his heart is like an adamant stone; his "tender mercies are cruel." He could even return a fugitive slave to his master for money.

- 16. Another effect and manifestation of this hardness of heart is, an unwillingness to take pains to oblige anybody; especially a stranger, or some one in whom he has no particular personal interest. He will not be at expense and pains-taking for the good of others. If anybody suffers, what is that to him? He goes not to seek out the poor or the suffering. He will get along as cheaply as he can in regard to all expense or pains-taking for the poor, or for the kingdom of Christ.

It is curious to see how hard-hearted persons will get along in such cases. They will pay their minister, who labors for their souls, as little as possible; they will cut down the wages of the sexton, who makes the meeting-house comfortable and clean for their use, to the lowest point; if any extra meetings are proposed, they will object on account of the cost, the extra expense that it will make; if anything is to be done for the cause of God, they will get along without doing their full share, if possible.

- 17. Another effect and manifestation of hardness of heart, is a great tardiness and superficiality in confessing any wrong done, either to God or man.

When confessions are made, they are dry, heartless, superficial, and perhaps mixed up with recrimination and throwing blame upon others. The confessions of such a mind will not be ingenuous, fair, full, free, but the opposite of all these. Such persons will confess as far as they are obliged in all decency to confess; especially so far as their iniquities are known, and cannot be hid. But their confessions are not spontaneous, not generous, not satisfactory either to God or man.

- 18. Another effect and manifestation of hardness of heart is an aptness to indulge in resentful feelings. If any one has injured them, or neglected them, they resent it. They indulge such feelings that they cannot be cordial or kind to such persons; cannot pray for them; cannot labor for their good. They lay it up against them; and render even themselves unhappy by the hard, unkind, and jealous feelings which they indulge.

- 19. Another effect and manifestation of hardness of heart is a want of the spirit of prayer. If such persons pray, it is not in the Spirit; there is no unction, no power, no prevalence in their prayers.

Indeed their prayers are not prayers. They are not supplication; they are not intercession and pleading; they are not the language of want, felt and realized. They are theological, philosophical, didactic, polemic -- anything but supplication.

You will hear persons whose hearts are hard, often engage in what they call prayer -- and scarcely a petition in their prayer. It is all talk, preaching, exhortation, perhaps accusation, but little or no real supplication.

You feel agonized to hear it. It does not touch you; it does not help your own spirit to pray; it does not bring out the responsive amen. No; it is anything but the spirit of prayer. A hard heart cannot pray.

You can hear a hard-hearted man pray, but you cannot feel him. Or rather, I should have said, you can hear him preach, or exhort, or theologize; but you cannot feel him pray, for he has not the spirit of prayer.

- 20. Another effect and manifestation of hardness of heart is the total absence of a loving and compassionate spirit.

His prayers are not loving and compassionate; if a preacher, his preaching is not loving and compassionate; if not a preacher, in conversation and social intercourse he is not loving and compassionate. He is not compassionate to the poor, to the ignorant, to the oppressed, to the afflicted, to the tried and tempted.

A hard heart will manifest a general want of the loving and compassionate in social and Christian intercourse.

- 21. The hard-hearted are not watchful against stumbling others. They do not love others; are not careful for their well-being. They are so set upon having their own will and their own way, and securing their own ends, that they are very reckless of their influence, whether they stumble others or not. They will speak against Christians, and against ministers, and in many ways say that which is calculated in the highest degree to prejudice others against religion, against truth, against God., and yet not feel it, not realize what they are doing.
- 22. When they have stumbled others, the hard-hearted are not willing to take up the stumbling blocks by making full confession and setting all right. They are too proud to do this. They do not care enough about the evil they have done, to hasten with all earnestness to remove the stumbling blocks out of the way.
- 23. The hard-hearted have no true brotherly love. They do not feel for Christ's people, or feel for Christ's church. They can see the state of religion low, meetings poorly attended, but little of the spirit of prayer in the church, sinners remaining unconverted, and Christ dishonored in the

house of His friends; and neither sigh nor cry in view of such a state of things.

They are so taken up with their self-seeking ways as to have little thought of Christ's dishonor, or the soul's ruin. They live on in an unfeeling, unconcerned manner, while hundreds around them are perishing in sin.

REMARKS.

1. From what has been said, some of you can see why it is that you have so little feeling on religious subjects.

Some of you profess to be in a state of consecration to God, who manifest no feeling for the souls around you.

Now, do you not see that you are deceived, that your hearts are hard? Your will is after all committed to self-pleasing, and not to pleasing God.

2. You see the secret of alienation among brethren. Their hearts are hard. Now they cannot see alike. Being in this hardened state, every one sees everything in the light, or rather in the darkness, of his own selfishness and self-will. Each one has but a poor opinion of the other; each one justifies himself and condemns the other. They have no Christian confidence, for they have really no Christian character.

3. Hardness of heart is often the ruin of families. If members of the same family become stubborn and willful, of course everything is ajar in the family. If the father or mother, or both, become hard-hearted toward each other, it will scatter desolation throughout all the family. Everything will go wrong; tempers wrong, words wrong -- no loving government or influence, but all will be desolate.

4. Hardness of heart is often the curse and ruin of churches. Sometimes a deacon, or some prominent member of the church, has a hard heart. He is self-willed, opinionated; does not care for the church half as much as he cares for himself. Perhaps two of the deacons will become hardened; and then be striving with each other; create division in the church; stand in the way of the influence of the pastor; stir up a party spirit in the church; and all will be moral desolation. Until those deacons have their hearts softened, nothing can be done to counteract their influence. If in such cases the church could kindly and with unanimity set them aside, the difficulty in some measure could be obviated. But if the deacons or leading members become hardened, it is very likely that they will be instrumental in hardening others; and then woe to the minister, woe to the parish, woe to the church! Hardness of heart will be the ruin of all.

5. Many seem really given over to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. This is an awful state to be in. It is awful to the subject of it.

A hard-hearted person is in a most deplorable state; in a most unhappy state; in a most guilty state; in a state fatal to his salvation, if he abides in it.

Again, it is an awful state in respect to all those connected with a hard-hearted person.

What an awful thing it is for a church to have a hard-hearted minister!

He will be blind to the wants of the people, and unloving and unfeeling in his treatment of them. He will inevitably do them infinitely more harm than good.

And it is an evil thing for a minister to have a hard-hearted church, and a hard-hearted congregation. They will probably starve him, neglect him, abuse him, tie his hands and prevent his usefulness, break him down and destroy his influence -- or drive him away to seek a people that will receive the gospel.

6. From this subject we see how to account for the astonishing blindness of some persons. It is very striking, sometimes, to see what strange delusions people are laboring under.

They seem to be totally blind to their moral state. You cannot persuade them to look into the matter so thoroughly as to understand themselves. If you examine the matter to the bottom, you will find them committed to some false position; consequently, hardened and blinded. Or rather, their hardness consists in their committal to this false position; and their blindness is its natural result. While the heart is hard, everything, almost, is seen in a false light. The full impression of no truth is received; and much that is admitted is by no means felt or realized. Delusion is the inevitable consequence. In this state persons will justify that which will shock others immeasurably.

7. Fanatics are always hard-hearted. Fanaticism is not to be confounded with enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is over-heated zeal; a zeal amounting sometimes almost to insanity. Yet it may be kind and beautiful, were it not exaggerated. Fanaticism is a state of mind in which the malignant element predominates; in which the malign emotions are fanned into a flame and take the control of the will.

A fanatic is always hard-hearted, severe, censorious, cruel. Paul was in a state of fanaticism when he persecuted the church of God. They were fanatics of whom Christ said, "The days will come when he that killeth you will think that he doeth God-service." Fanatics are often as sincere as enthusiasts; but their very sincerity is culpable, is wicked.

Persecutors are always fanatics, and they are always hard-hearted. Paul, in his fanaticism and hard-heartedness, "verily thought that he ought to do many things, contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

The malign emotions having control of the will, the soul is in a false position, and can think itself doing God service in hunting and betraying the innocent.

Fanatics feel, but not charitably, not kindly. Even in prayer, or conversation, or preaching, or exhortation, the very tones of the voice, the gestures, the looks, manifest the hardness of the heart.

They do not speak tenderly or compassionately. If they have occasion to probe the conscience, to reprove or rebuke, they do not do it benevolently, but malevolently. They seem to take a pleasure in rebuke. They mistake their fanatical unkindness for Christian faithfulness.

8. A hard heart will so manifest itself in speaking, and praying, and doing everything, as to force upon tender minds a spirit of protest. Tender hearts cannot receive it, cannot fellowship it. You will always observe, if in a congregation there are a number of hard hearts, that they will sympathize with anything that is hard-hearted, either in speaking or praying; while, on the contrary, with the tender spirits these remarks and prayers will force a protest and a recoil.

They cannot fellowship them; cannot be interested in them; cannot receive the fanatical and hard-hearted remarks that have been made, or spirit that has been manifested.

9. We see why it is that some persons are always so full of fault-finding. They never seem to be kind, loving, forbearing. They do not yearn over those that are out of the way, and love them back to obedience; but they scold; they find fault; the very language of their speaking and praying but repels those whom they would try to win.

Ministers sometimes become hard-hearted, and by their fault-finding and scolding manner drive the church away rather than win them back to Christ. They do not, like a good shepherd, go before their sheep and lead them, but undertake to drive them. In this they greatly err; and it is generally owing to the hardness of their hearts. If they get melted down, they will take a different course, and a different result will almost certainly follow.

I knew a minister who had been regarded as a very faithful man, but he had no revival for a long time. He preached from sternness to his church, and as they said, scolded them; but the more fault he found with them the more occasion he had to find fault, for the worse they became. But he came to where there was a revival, became convicted, saw his mistake, went home to his people at the close of the week, and on Sabbath morning went into the pulpit to preach to them. Before he began to preach, he commenced to make confession of his hardness of heart and blindness of mind. He melted down -- they melted down. He saw things in a different light, presented in the compassion and melting of his spirit.

The heart of the church broke down, and that day commenced a glorious revival which gathered in most of the impenitent of the congregation.

Now, please remember that hardness of heart is a voluntary state of mind. It is a state of mind that continually resists the Holy Spirit; it is a self-justifying, cruel state of mind; it grieves, it dishonors God; it ruins the souls of men.

LECTURE VI.

March 27, 1861

HARDEN NOT YOUR HEART --No. 2

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

In speaking from these words I inquire,

I. What is it to harden the heart?

II. How men harden their hearts.

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

IV. The danger of hardening the heart against God.

I. What is it to harden the heart?

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

II. How men harden their hearts.

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

It is being an act of the mind or of the will, the mind always assigns to itself some reason for taking this position of self-will, and for maintaining this position of stubbornness against God. It is a matter of consciousness that the will has indirectly a great control of the feelings. If the mind commits itself by an act of will to any position, the feelings are brought to adjust themselves to the will's position; not always directly and instantly, but the feelings will soon come to sympathize with the attitude taken by the will. The reason is very obvious, the feelings are influenced by the thoughts, and the thoughts are directed by the will. When the will, then, is committed to a dishonest position, it will always use the intellect dishonestly; and by a dishonest use of the intellect will foster such thoughts as to prevent the feelings. This is common experience, as every one knows who has paid any particular attention to his own state of mind. A voluntary stubbornness always locks up the sensibility, and closes it against that class of emotions that would naturally result from a different attitude of the will. If the mind takes a position against God, it will use the intellect to justify its position, or to excuse it; consequently it will indulge only in thoughts, and arguments, and reflections, that justify its position, and therefore that poison and pervert the feelings and bring them into sympathy with the will. Men harden their hearts, then, by an uncandid and selfish use of the intellect, assigning to themselves such reasons for their conduct as to justify their taking this position.

- 2. Men harden their hearts by indulging prejudice against God. They commit themselves to a one-sided view of the whole question of God's claims, and government, and works. They are selfish, and therefore not candid. They designedly take a narrow view of all the questions between themselves and God, and indulge a host of prejudices with intent to justify their

rebellious state of mind.

- 3. They often harden their hearts by indulging prejudices against the church, against the ministry, against the truth. Press them to repent, and you will find in fact that they immediately betake themselves to finding fault with Christians and ministers. You will find their minds a perfect nest of prejudices against God's people; and they evidently resort to these as a reason for their position in regard to religion, to justify themselves in neglecting the claims of God. You cannot go and talk with one of these impenitent men without finding that he will instantly reveal to you a perfect nest of prejudices, which he harbors in his mind against God's people, and ministers, and truth, for the purpose of strengthening himself in his position of disobedience.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 8. Sinners often harden their hearts by indulging appetite. For example: they are accustomed to the use of tobacco, or intoxicating drinks; or they are accustomed to indulge in the use of various luxuries. Now if the claims of God are presented to them, those claims come directly into competition with appetite. For example: I heard of a man, who, through the use of intoxicating drinks, was likely to lose his eye-sight. His physician told him that he must abandon the use of intoxicating drinks, or entirely lose the use of his eyes. Upon this information he girded himself instantly, and said, "Then fare you well, old eyes." Thus he settled the question, hardened his heart, and probably lost his soul.
- 9. Men harden their hearts through the "fear of man that bringeth a snare." You often see cases in which persons are called to the performance of duty, and resist the claims of duty through the fear of man. If in meeting, those who are anxious are invited to come forward and take a certain seat, or to go into another room for instruction, if they are aware that certain persons are present, though greatly pressed with the claims of God, they will harden their hearts and refuse to go.
- 10. Men harden their heart in obedience to public sentiment. If the claims of God come into collision with the views and practices of men on a large scale, so that public sentiment is strongly adverse to the claims of God, many men will bow right down before public sentiment

and harden their hearts against God. They are afraid to take a stand against men, when in their wickedness they will take a stand against God. With most men public sentiment is omnipotent, and has far more power with them practically than all the claims of God. And whenever they are called to resist public sentiment and to sympathize with the claims of God, they gird themselves and resist God's claims.

- 11. Men harden their hearts by indulging erroneous views of God and His government. In this they are uncandid; but nevertheless they persist in charging certain things upon God, in stumbling at certain things in God's providence, or government, or dealings. They hedge themselves round about with lies, and hide themselves under falsehood, and thus strengthen themselves in their opposition to God.
- 12. The same is true of religion generally. It is striking, and awful sometimes, to see what views men will persist in entertaining of religion. Their perverseness in this respect is sometimes appalling. Hear them talk, and it would seem they must have been assisted by Satan himself to conjure up so much that is false, ridiculous, absurd, and often wicked, and charge it to religion.
- 13. Men often harden their hearts through a proud determination to receive nothing incomprehensible. They will not believe, they say, what they cannot understand. But this they apply only to religion and the claims of God. They cannot comprehend their own existence; and there is nothing in all nature around them that is not full of mystery, as absolutely beyond their comprehension as any mystery in religion. They can swallow an ocean of mystery on any other subject. But come to religion, the claims of God, the high policy of His eternal government, the mode of His own existence, and those great and wonderful things too high for us, where mystery is to be expected of course -- there, the sinner will stumble; there he proudly entrenches himself, and says, "I will not believe what I cannot understand" -- meaning, that unless he can understand the philosophy and the how, he will not believe the facts.
- 14. Men harden their hearts by withholding confidence in God. Unbelief is their great crime. If God takes never so much pains to gain their confidence, they proudly and persistently withhold it, and thus harden their hearts against God.
- 15. Men often harden their hearts by withholding confidence in man. They seem to throw away their confidence in everybody; and with the psalmist in his haste, they say, "All men are liars." Now, whenever you find a man who has lost confidence in everybody, you may know that he himself is a wicked man. This is exactly the opposite of the good man's state of mind. "Charity hopeth all things, and believeth all things." The truly good man may be too confiding. He is himself truthful, and not ready to suspect others of being false. He is himself honest and simple-hearted, and not in a state easily to suspect others of double-dealing and dishonesty. He loves everybody, and therefore wishes to think well of everybody. He is disposed to do so, and it is very easy and natural for him to do so. His error will naturally be in the excess of confidence. He will confide, sometimes, where he has not reason to confide. He has more confidence in man than man is entitled to; and this from the very nature of his simple-heartedness, of his own conscious honesty.

Whenever, therefore, you see a man that has no confidence in anybody, you may know

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

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

Is this not a fact with some of you? Have you not so long accustomed yourselves to put off God's claims that it has become with you a thing of course? When you came to meeting today, you expected to hear the claims of God: but did you expect to comply with them, to yield to these claims? Did you not as much expect to set the church on fire today, as you expected to become a Christian, and yield to the claims of God today? Did you not as much expect to reject these claims, as you expected to hear them presented? You did expect to be presented with them: but did you not as much expect to delay obedience as you expected to live? Such has been your habit of delay, that when God's claims are urged, you instantly repeat what you have so often done; you gird yourself and go your way, resisting these claims.

- 18. Many resist the claims of God through spiritual indolence. They are too spiritually indolent to make any effort for their own salvation, or to comply with the claims of God. These claims come home upon them, and press them to instant action and decision; but it is easier to resist them, as they have been in the habit of doing so long, than to comply. They have only to gird themselves up, to remain in disobedience. But to rule out every objection, and break down before God, will cause them more effort than they are disposed to make; hence they draw themselves up in the attitude of resistance, and growl out their "Nay," to the claims of God.
- 19. Men often harden their hearts on account of the real or supposed sins of professors of religion. These sins may be real, or they may be only supposed; nevertheless, they are made the occasion of caviling, and of resistance to God's claims. Such a man has wronged them, or wronged somebody else; such a professor has done so and so. He betakes himself to these by

way of strengthening himself in his position. He "eats up the sins of God's people as he eats bread, and will not call on the name of the Lord." Sometimes in dealing with them he has supposed them to be selfish.

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

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

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

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

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

- 21. Sinners still more frequently harden their hearts by yielding to their own censorious

tendencies. They have a bitter, sour spirit themselves. They are selfish, and suspect everybody else of being selfish.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sometimes they fear persecution from the other party, or from friends, or from enemies;

and will, therefore, harden their hearts whenever the claims of God are presented.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now, how great is our obligation to love God and our neighbor? I answer, it is as great as God's desire of our love; it is as great as His righteous claim upon our obedience; it is as great as the intrinsic value of the good of Himself and His universe which He requires us to will. The fundamental reason why we would will the good of God and His universe, is the intrinsic value of this good to God and His universe. This is the fundamental reason that imposes the obligation on us. It is the intrinsic value of this good, in view of which God commands us to will it. Now, if this is the reason we should will it, if this reason imposes the obligation, the obligation is as great and broad as the reason that imposes it.

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

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

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

- 1. It is dangerous, because, if you continue it, you will never be converted.

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

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

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

REMARKS.

1. In the light of this subject we can see why so many persons have little or no religious feeling. The fact is, their will is committed in the attitude of disobedience and self-seeking; consequently they divert their thoughts from all that class of truths that would make them feel.

2. Please remember that men are the authors of their own hardness of heart. Sinners often complain of their hardness of heart, as if it was not of their own creation. They speak of it as if it were not their own persistent act. In such cases, they mean by hardness of heart simply the apathy of their sensibility, their want of feeling. But this is only a result, a natural consequence of the hardness of their hearts. It is the stubbornness of their will, their willfulness, that constitutes the hardness of their

hearts; and, as we have seen, this want of feeling is a result. To be sure, they cannot feel while their will remains girded and embraced in its opposition to God. Or, if they do feel, their feelings will be those of remorse, and regret, and agony; the tender emotions cannot be brought into exercise while they harden themselves, and make their wills obstinate in resistance to God.

3. We see many persons trying to feel by making efforts to feel; trying to excite emotions of sorrow, and love, and gratitude, while the controversy is not yielded, so far as the attitude of their will is concerned. They have not submitted themselves to God, have not adjusted themselves in His will, have not yielded the controversy; and yet they are endeavoring to feel as if they had yielded the controversy. Their voluntary stubbornness remains, and they are vainly endeavoring to feel.

This, I, fear, is the case with many of you. You complain that you do not feel; you spend your time in trying to feel. You would feel sorrow for your sins, while you persist in holding fast to them. You would force the tender emotions towards God into exercise, while your will cruelly braces itself against Him. In this you labor in vain, and spend your strength for naught.

4. By what innumerable shifts men harden their hearts and secure their own damnation. I might as well preach a month as an hour, in enumerating the innumerable ways in which men manage to harden their hearts against God. Men manifest a kind of infernal sagacity and cunning in resorting to every possible excuse that shall justify their stubbornness towards their heavenly Father. They make constant resistance to His claims and offers of mercy.

5. Sinners use their free agency, even the whole strength of it, to resist their own salvation. This is the only reason why men are lost. Christ has died for all men, and offers salvation to all.

The fact that men have sinned, is no sufficient reason that they should be lost; but if they will harden their hearts against the claims and mercies of God, it is impossible for Him to save them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LECTURE VII.

April 10, 1861

TENDER-HEARTEDNESS --No. 3

Text.--Eph. 4: 32: "Be ye tender-hearted."

In speaking from these words I inquire,

I. What it is to be tender-hearted.

II. The effects and manifestations of tender-heartedness.

I. What it is to be tender-hearted.

In my last I said that hard-heartedness was stubbornness; that it consisted in the committed state of the will against the claims of God; was a selfish, unsubdued will.

Tender-heartedness is the opposite of this. It is the will committed to the claims of God, in the attitude of obedience to God, of submission to Him. It is, in short, benevolence; a state of mind adjusted in the will of God; a state that accepts His whole will, and commits the whole mind to obedience.

II. I notice the effects and manifestations of this tender-heartedness.

- 1. Candor is an effect and a manifestation of this state of the will.

A tender heart will always use the intellect in a candid manner; it will weigh evidence, and be careful to do nobody any injustice in judgment; it will weigh the claims of God, and the claims of a neighbor. Hence,

- 2. It will be easily convinced of error, if error there be. Being candid and open to conviction, and in a yielding state of mind to all truth and duty, if any error is indulged, the mind is very open to conviction.
- 3. Another effect and manifestation of tender-heartedness is great readiness to retract any error of practice or opinion.

The mind, yielding as air, is easily convinced of error; and when convinced, spontaneously retracts. The opposite of this is true in hardness of heart. The mind is uncandid, hard to be convinced, and not ready to retract even then.

- 4. Another effect and manifestation of tenderness of heart is a fear of prejudice, or pre-judgment. A mind in this state will be on its guard against a hasty opinion, and especially a hasty judgment against any person. In this state everybody is loved; consequently the mind is disposed to think favorable of all the objects of its regard.

It is disposed to judge charitably, and to avoid all prejudice. It regards prejudice as a great injustice; and if prejudices have been entertained, this state of mind will instantly yield them, and yield them joyfully, as soon as evidence can be obtained to show that there is prejudice.

- 5. Another effect and manifestation of tenderness of heart is charitableness in judgment.

As I have just said, the state of heart of which we are speaking, is that of love to God and man; consequently the mind in this state will judge kindly and hopefully of everybody so far as it honestly can.

- 6. A sixth manifestation of this state of mind is tenderness of conscience.

When the heart is tender, the conscience is very susceptible, easily excited to activity, and readily makes its impression on the sensibility. You will find persons in this state exceedingly sensitive of the presence of any sin. Its perceptions of moral distinctions are very delicate; and its decisions are very emphatic, and often tremendously severe. I have known persons to have so much tenderness of heart as to receive impressions that were almost unendurable.

- 7. A tender heart will be appreciative of the nature of sin.

Sin consists in a state of mind that does not care for God or man; but cares really only for self and for those that are regarded as parts of self.

It is a state that refuses to will the good of God and of being in general; and does not really concern itself for any interests but its own. Now a tender heart can appreciate the

great wickedness of this contempt of the interests of others; this reckless disregard of God and man.

To have neglected God appears to a tender heart to be a great and awful sin.

To have cared nothing for His rights, or interests, or glory, appears to a tender heart to be a sin well-worthy of damnation.

- 8. A tender heart will manifest a great sensibility in regard to the intrinsic ill-desert of sin. It will readily concede that it deserves eternal banishment from God. It is not blind to the ill-desert of sin, as hardness of heart is; but it can assign no bounds to the guilt of sin.

To have wronged God is an inexpressibly terrible thing to a tender heart.

- 9. A tender heart will manifest, at times, deep sorrow for sin. Not only can it appreciate intellectually the guilt of sin; but the sensibility is easily and deeply broken up by this sense of the guilt of sin.

A tender heart is a loving heart. A loving heart throws the sensibility open to be deeply moved by a sense of the intrinsic guilt of sin against God. The fountains of the great deep of the sensibility are easily broken up, and sorrows easily gush and flow where the will has yielded the whole controversy and taken its proper attitude. If the will has given scope to the feelings, and has let in upon the sensibility the real facts as they are in all their freshness, the sorrows will gush like a fountain.

- 10. A tender heart is highly appreciative of the love and compassion of God. It will not only admit the great love and compassion of God, but it will feel it.

It throws the sensibility open to be affected by a sense of this love and compassion. It throws open the windows of the mind to let in the light of God's compassion, its warmth and its influence. In this state the soul will not complain that it cannot realize the love and compassion of God.

- 11. A tender heart is greatly humbled by a sense of the love and compassion of Christ, and deeply moved in view of what He has done to atone for sin.

This looks dreamy to a hard heart; but to a tender heart it is reality. The love of Christ in dying for the soul, is an overwhelming consideration to a tender heart.

I can conceive that a daughter might become so hardened toward her mother, so disobedient and unsubdued, as to do that which would cost her mother her life; and yet be unable either to appreciate her own sin, or the great love of her mother in giving up her life for her daughter.

But on the other hand, I can conceive a daughter so subdued, that, if she had done that which had cost her mother her life, she would feel as if she never could forgive herself; never could think of it without a flood of tears; never could speak of it without breaking

down with sorrow.

If her heart were tender, the very thought of what she had done, and what love and compassion the suffering mother had for her, would carry her away in a flood of weeping. Thus it is in respect to Christ. When the heart is tender, the whole mind is easily affected, greatly subdued, and humbled unspeakably low, in view of those sins that crucified Christ, that love that bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

- 12. A tender heart will always manifest great religious sensibility on all questions connected with the kingdom of Christ. You will find that such a mind is easily excited, and more easily excited on religious subjects than any other. There is a general tenderness of feelings, and a great susceptibility of emotion, especially of the tender emotions.
- 13. A tender heart will always manifest great fear of grieving Christ. It will have supreme regard to Christ's feelings. It cannot bear to grieve, cannot bear to offend Him. It will often seem to such a mind that it had rather die than to grieve the Savior. It will not only say with Joseph, "How can I commit this great wickedness and sin against God," but it will spontaneously exclaim in the presence of temptation, "I cannot, will not do that which will grieve the Savior that died for me."
- 14. A tender heart will manifest great fear of stumbling others, of misleading them, of creating prejudice in their minds against Christ or His religion. It will manifest great fear of saying or doing anything that may in anywise mislead them to their injury, or to the injury of the kingdom of Christ. If at any time it has done anything to stumble others, the recollection of it will be too painful for endurance; and the soul will hasten to remove the stumbling block, and will not rest until it is done.
- 15. A tender heart will manifest great reluctance to grieve any one. If, in faithfulness to the souls of any, it finds itself obliged to be severe, to reprove and rebuke with any degree of sternness, it will be done with reluctance and with grief; and the tender-hearted will often find that in probing others he inflicts a deep wound on his own sensibility; that while he uses the sword of the Spirit unsparingly, the foundations of his own compassion are stirred to their bottom. He will be obliged to gird himself with the whole strength of his will to perform the duty, and strengthen himself to the utmost to avoid breaking down in the effort.
- 16. Tenderness of heart will manifest great readiness to repent and confess, if in anything it finds itself to have been in the wrong. The repentance will be spontaneous, and the confession thorough.

To such a mind it is no trial to confess, but rather a luxury. Confession will not be guarded and half-hearted; but such a soul will make a clean breast of it, and confess the whole, and will not stop short of finding full relief.

- 17. A tender heart will manifest great tenderness in justifying self. It is apt to be suspicious of self; and is afraid of a self-justifying spirit.

It will not, as a general thing assert at once its own consciousness of innocence; but, if there be any doubt, will take the matter into consideration, look narrowly into all the motives, weigh every circumstance with great candor, and will after all often come to the conclusion that Paul did when he said, " I will not judge mine own self."

Or at any rate, if it cannot see its wrong, it will say, " I leave it to the judgment of God. I may be wrong, though I am not conscious of it. Still, I will not be too positive; God may see that I am in the wrong."

But again,

- 18. A tender heart is very apt to manifest a self-accusing spirit.

It is curious to see that where brethren in the hardness of their hearts have each held the other to be in the wrong; as soon as their hearts become tender, each one insists that he is almost, if not altogether, in the wrong. He thinks himself greatly more to blame than his brother; and often so much so, that he frequently thinks that his brother would not have been in the blame at all if it had not been for his own wrong. I have seen many instances of this -- that as soon as the hearts of the people become tender, every one could see his own wrong much more plainly than he could his brother's.

And a self-accusing spirit, rather than a self-justifying spirit, is manifest throughout the whole circle of the tender-hearted.

- 19. A tender heart manifests a spirit of self-loathing. It cannot endure its former selfishness and folly. When it thinks of its former self-seeking and wicked state of mind, it cannot express the loathing that it has of self. Such a mind seems to itself to have been the most hateful of all beings -- perhaps the most worthy of damnation, or least worthy of notice; and often feels surprised that anybody should treat it otherwise than with utter neglect and contempt.

In speaking the other day to a sister in the church, whose heart has recently become tender, I said to her that I was trying to get time to call upon her. She replied, tearfully, " How can you think of calling upon me? I am not worthy that anybody should take any notice of me." As I was speaking to a brother but a few days since, he made this remark: "I am not worthy to be on the face of the earth -- I am not fit to live in human society -- I am a loathing to myself -- I have no right to live, I have been so vile."

And yet neither of these persons have been guilty, to my knowledge, of any conduct that in the sight of men would have been regarded as disgraceful. But this is the natural tendency of a tender heart when fully convinced by the Spirit of God.

In another case, a sister said to me, "I never saw myself as I have today. I am so hateful, I do not think it would be right in God to forgive me. Really, I do not want to be forgiven -- I feel as if God's honor so demanded that I should be punished." And this she said with many tears, and in a tone and with a manner so subdued as to be very touching. How opposite all this to hardness of heart!

- 20. A tender heart will manifest much concern lest it should be more highly thought of than is just and reasonable. It will manifest a desire to confess over and over again, to make confession and restitution full and complete; and if it discovers any want of fullness in the confession or restitution, it will not rest without repeating it and making such additions as shall fully meet the convictions of this deeply impressed spirit.
- 21. A tender heart will manifest a great unwillingness to blame others. It "hopeth all things;" it "believeth all things." It is ready to "cover a multitude of sins;" and especially will this be so in regard to sins committed against itself. If it has been wronged in anywise, it does not heap the blame upon the offending party. It does not delight in this, in criminating and making out the strongest case against the offender, but exactly the opposite. It will judge him as charitably as possible; it will make for him all reasonable apologies. It does not like to bear down upon him, and dwell upon his fault; but is easily pacified, ready to overlook, spontaneous in forgiveness. It will forgive willingly and thoroughly; will make a clean breast of forgiveness, laying up nothing, holding on to no shade of resentful feeling.
- 22. A tender heart is slow to believe evil of others. It loves every one, and therefore is disposed to think well of every one. This is the natural result of love. We do not easily believe evil of those whom we greatly love, but on the contrary are slow to believe evil of them.

The tender-hearted are slow to believe evil of any one, either friends or foes.

Indeed, a tender-hearted soul has no foes, in the sense of his having any enmity toward any one. It loves all; it can pray for all; it is disposed to think well of all; and it is always grieved when compelled to believe evil of any one.

Hard-heartedness is the opposite of this. It manifests a readiness to believe evil, to judge harshly and censoriously; it is ready to retain resentful feelings; it forgives ungraciously and superficially, and after all, retains resentful feelings. But not so with tender-heartedness.

Tender-heartedness is grieved to be obliged to think evil of others; and dismisses all such thoughts, and all such judgments, and all such things, from the mind as soon as possible.

- 23. Kindness of manner is always an effect and manifestation of tenderness of heart. It cannot be unkind in manner; but is loving, compassionate, forbearing.

In manner, and tone of voice, and gesture, and look, it will be kind, compassionate, benevolent.

- 24. Another effect of tenderness of heart is generosity. It is generous to the poor, generous in trade, generous in social intercourse. Largeness of heart and beneficence will always manifest themselves when the heart is tender.
- 25. A self-sacrificing spirit for the good of others will always be manifested when the heart is tender. It is striking to see how much pains the tender-hearted will take to promote the good of

others.

This Jesus did; this His followers do; this is natural as its breath to a tender-hearted mind. It does not come hard for the tender-hearted to deny themselves, to make sacrifices for the good of others. In them it is spontaneous; it is an outburst of a state of mind; it is the natural development of a Christian spirit within them.

You will find that such persons are always willing to do all they can for God and souls; and indeed, they are greatly desirous of doing a great deal more good than they can. Their hearts are often too large for their means. When they have done all they can, it seems to them that they have done little; and their grief is that they cannot do more. They will cry out within, " O, for an ocean of means to meet the necessities of all the children of want!"

- 26. A tender heart never indulges hard or resentful feelings at all. If in any way disobliged, it lays up nothing ; if in anywise wronged, it spontaneously forgives; and can earnestly pray that God would bring the wrong-doer to repentance, and forgive him.
- 27. The tender-hearted will not resent reproof; but are always thankful for it. The more thoroughly and honestly you call the attention of such a one to anything that has been wrong in himself, he is all the more your friend. He really thanks you for the suggestion or the reproof; and will be sure to profit by it. He realizes that they are his best friends who deal most faithfully with him. He sincerely wishes to be rid of everything that can hinder his usefulness, or in anywise do harm. He sincerely wishes to set everything right with God and man; and most thankful is he to any one that will kindly help him to understand himself.
- 28. Of course the tender-hearted have no enemies, in the sense that they have any quarrel with anybody.

They are not easily offended; they are not jealous, and critical, and ready to make another an offender for a word. They are ready to make apologies for those who in anywise appear either to neglect them or to encroach upon their rights.

- 29. The tender-hearted will manifest a realizing sense of the reality of religious truth. The Bible deeply impresses them; preaching, and all religious truth, makes them deeply solemn. It greatly searches them; it takes hold upon their whole being; and to them it is a solemn matter to have God speak to them. In this state of mind they are easily and savingly influenced by the truth of God. Every sermon will take effect upon them.
- 30. The tender-hearted manifest great depth and sincerity of feeling.

In them there is nothing of affectation; for they feel so deeply that no affectation is necessary, and there is no temptation to any such thing. There is no cant about them, no effort to get up an appearance of feeling; but it requires a great deal more effort to suppress the too audible manifestation of it. There is everything in religious truth to make the soul feel, to excite it in the very highest degree. When the heart is hard this is not realized, the truth is not seen; but when the eye is single, the whole body is full of light.

When the heart is tender, then truth has a tremendous bearing on the sensibility. It moves it in all its depths and manifestations; and it sometimes requires not a little effort to suppress even the boisterous manifestations of feeling. I have often, myself, when my heart was thoroughly subdued, felt it difficult to avoid screaming in view of the state of sinners, or shouting in view of the love of God. In this state of mind the will is yielded up to truth; and consequently the feelings, having full scope, are very liable to boil over.

But of course there is a good deal of difference in different temperaments, in respect to the extent to which the feelings will be excited when the heart is tender. But as all men have sensibility, all men can feel when the appropriate conditions are fulfilled; and when the heart is tender, there is generally a very great susceptibility to feeling in every mind.

Men are very apt to apologize for the want of feeling, by saying, that they are of such a temperament that they cannot expect to feel. I have heard much of this; and often have I seen these same persons, when thoroughly subdued to God, as full of feeling as they could hold.

- 31. A tender heart will manifest much prayerfulness for the salvation of souls. When the heart is tender, compassion is strongly excited, the danger of souls is clearly apprehended, so that crying to God in their behalf is an inevitable result.

Persons in this state of mind will not go over with a cold statement of their own wants, and confine their prayers to themselves and a few friends; but the yearnings of such a mind will pour themselves out in mighty prayer for those that are perishing.

- 32. A tender heart will manifest much watchfulness, and will walk softly before God. When the heart is tender, there is a solemn awe vesting upon the mind; a fearfulness of offending in word, or thought, or deed; a watchfulness over the tongue and over the life; and a walking carefully and softly, lest the Holy Spirit should be grieved.
- 33. A man of tender heart will manifest much concern for backsliders. He will be pitiful and earnest; and in endeavors to reclaim them will try to restore them in the spirit of meekness, considering himself lest he also should be tempted.

REMARKS.

1. How differently does everything appear in this state from what it does in a state of hardness of heart. Religion, the world, our neighbors, our sins, the conduct of everybody else -- all, all appear so changed as soon as the heart is softened.

The change is indeed wonderful, in passing from a state of hardness to a state of tenderness of heart. It seems almost as if we had changed worlds. Everything is seen in so different a light; everything makes so different an impression upon us! Life is altogether a different affair -- and so is death.

2. When the heart is softened there is a great readiness to correct any mistakes that were made while the heart was hard. Even bargains that were made in hardness of heart, and without any misgiving, at

the time, as to their being truly honest, will be seen, often, when the heart is tender, to have been oppressive and selfish; and the mind will not willingly let them rest without proposing to set the matter right.

A hard-hearted man buys a poor man's cow. The poor man needs to sell her, and he buys her for a little less than what she is worth. When his heart becomes tender and he thinks of the poor man's cow, he will be very apt not to rest till he pays the full value of her. I have known many striking instances like this.

3. A tender heart always brings great peace to the soul.

While the heart is hard, the mind is restive under the government of God; and in human society the will is too stiff. The hard-hearted man elbows his way in human society, and chafes under the government of God. But as soon as his heart is tender and subdued, he quiets himself like a weaned child under the government of God. He bows himself to the providence of God; he feels his way carefully and kindly among mankind; he walks in peace with God, and so far as in him lies with all men.

4. It is easy to deal with tender hearted people. They are fair-minded, honorable, and will take no advantage. In dealing with them you need not stand upon your guard lest they should devour you; for they spontaneously give you that which is your own.

They are not grasping, and trying to get the lion's share; but would do by their neighbors as they would do by themselves.

It is easy to get along with tender-hearted people, in all the concerns of life. They are candid, unselfish, good neighbors, kind friends, generous and loving in all the relation of life.

5. There is something very beautiful in tender-heartedness.

Indeed, it is often very affecting to see the beauty of a tender-hearted mind.

To see its simplicity, its unaffected sincerity, its self-sacrifice, its pains-taking for the food of others, its care not to injure others, its fear of prejudice -- and indeed all the manifestations of such a mind are so symmetrical, so beautiful, so Christ-like -- it is a luxury to live and move in the midst of such minds.

6. How beautiful will heaven be, where all hearts are tender; and God's heart the most tender of all.

There is no hard place in God's heart; no hard heart in heaven; no blind, selfish mind; no censorious, cruel, unfeeling soul there; but all is perfect tenderness, and on God's part infinite tenderness.

7. It often requires great nerve to probe and search a tender heart. It sometimes happens that a mind that has become tender-hearted, has forgotten some past wrong. Its attention needs to be called to something it has not considered. In this state the soul will be aware that there is something that binds

here and there; and that the mind, though tender, has not yet full liberty. The spirit of prayer does not flow spontaneously; there is something that binds the feelings, something that checks the power of faith.

In such cases the heart needs searching; the wedges that bind, need to be sought out; the error detected. But to do this, as I said, requires nerve, and is often a painful operation to the one who is called to this duty.

I must say, that in my own experience, I have often undergone exquisite suffering from having such a work to do.

It has been sometimes with the utmost difficulty that I could make up my mind to use the probe thoroughly; and when I could see what needed to be said, it seemed as if I could scarcely say it. But yet such a labor always pays. When the work is done, the mind is healed; and you will surely say that the pain could be well-afforded.

8. Tenderness of heart is always essential to peace of mind and joy in God. And where the heart is really tender, and it has been thoroughly searched and emptied, its peace will be like a river, and its joy purely spontaneous.

Lastly. Let no one stop short of a thoroughly tender heart. When the members of a church are tender-hearted, it is easy to settle all difficulties.

The brethren are then disposed, each one, to blame himself; and to go as far as he ought in justifying others.

All are ready to forgive; and there is no difficulty that cannot be well and easily settled. I have often seen brethren in a state of controversy in which I could see that the whole difficulty with them was the hardness of their hearts. They were blind, and for the time being each thought the other to be the most in fault. But as soon as their hearts are tender, this state of things is reversed. Each one is ready to blame himself, and difficulties will soon be adjusted. Brethren in such cases will not rest nor sleep, if they can avoid it, till they have confessed to each other, and prayed with each other, and restored each other to confidence.

Neighborhood broils will cease, family broils will cease, church broils will cease, as soon as the hearts of the parties are tender. Church-members will cease to oppose their ministers, and ministers cease to think hard of their people, when there is mutual tenderness of heart. Then there will be no controversy which shall be greatest; but members will vie with each other to get the lowest seat, each one feeling, the lowest seat belongs to me.

The Kingdom of God In Consciousness

Lecture VIII
April 24, 1861

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Rom. 14:17: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

In speaking from these words, I inquire --

I. What is the kingdom of God?

II. Three particulars which constitute this kingdom of God.

I. What is the kingdom of God?

Answer:

- 1. It is not an outward organization; it is not the visible church, or any ecclesiastical establishment whatever.
- 2. It is not any material or worldly good.
- 3. But it is the reign of Christ, the King, in the soul of man.

II. I notice the three particulars which are here said to constitute this kingdom of God, "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

- 1. What is righteousness?

Answer:

- (1.) Righteousness is moral uprightness. This is that love to God and man which the Bible requires. Righteousness does not belong strictly to muscular action, but to the state of the heart. And righteousness is really the spirit of the moral law existing and established in the heart. Christ promised that at a certain time he would "write his law upon the hearts of his people, and engrave it in their inward parts, and they should all know the Lord from the least of them unto the greatest of them." The spirit of this law, that which the law really requires in its meaning and intent, is supreme, perfect, disinterested love to God, and equal love to man.

It requires that God should be loved for his own sake, and supremely, because He is supremely and infinitely great and good; that man should be

loved as we love ourselves; and that this love to God and man should be expressed in all appropriate ways in all the relations of life. This love, with all its appropriate expressions in the temper, and life, and spirit, is righteousness. It is a voluntary love; and therefore must reveal itself in uprightness of life in every relation in which we exist.

- o (2.) Righteousness is the opposite of unrighteousness. Unrighteousness is a withholding from God and man their due; a spirit of don't-care for God or man; that contemns the rights, and feelings, and authority of God, and the rights of our neighbor. It is a want of conformity to the moral law, a voluntary withholding of obedience to it. Righteousness is the opposite of this. It is love positively exercised, with all its positive fruits.

It is real active devotion to the whole mind of God, and also devotion to the interests and well being of man.

- o (3.) Righteousness is a state of mind in which there is a continual offering of self in a confiding love-service to God. God is served diligently and with all the powers, with respect to him and not for pay. It is a cheerful and willing service; not because we must, but from a supreme interest in him.

It always implies diligence, and industry, and study, to please God; it always implies the avoiding of everything that can displease him; and in short, it consists in the heart's being fully committed to do and suffer all the will of God, and that readily, and joyfully for his own sake.

- o (4.) Righteousness also involves sincere devotion to the interests of man; a willingness to deny self when by so doing we can promote the greater good of others, and that from real regard to our fellow-man as to a brother. It is in fact the spirit of universal brotherhood practically carried out.

This, then, is the righteousness which constitutes the great element or peculiarity of the kingdom of God in the soul.

It is Christ's righteousness imparted to the soul of man. It is Christ's law or will taking effect in the soul of man, and begetting his own righteousness in us; and thus we come to be partakers of the righteousness of God, not merely by imputation, but by actual experience, and active love and service. I pray you, let no one overlook the true end of righteousness. Do not forget that true righteousness is the very love in kind that is in Christ's own heart, and that led him to do all he had done for mankind.

This love, it should be understood, must necessarily express itself in the life, because the connection between this love and outward action is a connection of necessity. This love consists in the will's devotion to God and to the good of man. It is consecration; it is making common cause with God and man, and unifying ourselves with God's state of mind.

- 2. The second element of the kingdom of God in the soul of man is said to be "peace."
 - (1.) Peace of mind is not apathy; a state of indifference to God, his claims, or service. Peace is the opposite of war, or strife, or friction, under the government of God. I say, it is the opposite of this; it is a state of cordiality, and of conscious cordiality, existing between the soul and God.
 - (2.) It does not consist merely in the soul's being reconciled to God, but also includes the fact that God is reconciled to man, and that this is revealed to us in consciousness. In this state of mind we are aware that God has accepted us, and forgiven us, that our peace is made with him.
 - (3.) Peace is a state of universal satisfaction of mind with God's will as expressed in creation and providence, his law and gospel. I say satisfaction with his will, for if in anything we are not satisfied with God, we are restive, like an ungoverned child. If we profess to submit, we do it ungraciously, and not really. There cannot be peace between us and God as long as a particle of dissatisfaction with God's ways and will remains in the heart.
 - (4.) This peace is a state of mind in which there is a conscious yielding of everything that God claims. The mind is settled to do so; to make this the universal law of our activity; to accept all God's requirements, and yield, not merely of necessity, but willingly and cordially to all that He requires of us.

This state of mind is like the calm, deep flow of a river. It is a calm, deep flow of feeling in conscious harmony with God's state of mind. It is remarkable that in this state of mind we are conscious, not of the mind's lying still, and being in a quiescent state, but the sensibility seems to be flowing, a deep current of the mind. And it all flows in one direction. Like a river, there is no conflicting of different currents, some flowing in one direction, and some in another.

There may be ripples in the current -- there may be obstructions so that the waters in one place may dam up and boil over the obstructions, but there are no counter currents forcing their way upward and conflicting with the general stream, with the little eddyings here and there, and the obstructions, and boilings up, and flowings around the obstructing objects here and there. Upon the whole, the whole movement of the mind, the intellect, the sensibility, the will, all come flowing in one direction, and the flow is harmony; the flow is peace, the flow is a deep, broad river of life and love.

This peace is like the subdued, settled, satisfied state of a weaned child. As the Psalmist says, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of its mother; my soul is even as a weaned child."

Every one knows that an unsubdued child, unsettled in obedience, is continually chafing under parental authority; and there can be no real peace between the parent and the child unless the child be actually and thoroughly subdued, so that it will accept the will of the parent as its law of life. And when the child is really and thoroughly subdued, so that it is cheerful and satisfied with its state of subjection; when this state becomes its chosen adopted state, and this subjection is preferred to following its own counsels and its own will, then there is peace between the parent and the child. Then the child itself has peace of mind; then the child itself can be happy. It is not restive, and keeping up a constant friction with parental authority. Just so is it in the government of God. While the king is striving to set up his kingdom in the heart, and the sinner is resisting, there is conviction, remorse, dissatisfaction, struggling, evading, stubbornness, chafing, cavilling; and all the elements of disorder, of sin, of turmoil, are in the soul. In this state there can be no peace. This heart cannot be saved; it cannot, by any possibility, go to heaven. This mind can never have peace until it is completely, and joyfully, and universally subject to the will of God.

Now the peace of the gospel consists in this perfectly subdued, settled, confiding, joyful, quiescent state of mind, in respect to God, his government, character, requirements, and dealings.

- (5.) This peace always implies and includes a state of mind the opposite of condemnation and remorse.

I say, the opposite of these; in other words, we are conscious, as I have already intimated, of our being accepted; not only of our being at peace with God, but of his being at peace with us. A state of forgiveness, of being restored to favor, of being on good terms with God through his abounding grace, is always involved in this peace.

- (6.) This peace is the opposite of all unbelieving carefulness, and anxiety that could corrode, fret, or distress the mind.

When the kingdom of God is set up in the soul, not only is it true that God's whole will is accepted; but the soul has such confidence in God, has such spirituality in regard to perceiving God in his universal providence, that recognizing God in all the movements of his providence, that unbelieving carefulness and corroding anxiety that so much disturbs the world, is shut out from the mind where the kingdom of God is set in.

- 3. I notice the third element which is involved in this kingdom of God, viz; "joy in the Holy Ghost."
 - (1.) This is not a mere joy arising out of the supposition that we are safe. Although this

consideration is a matter of joy, still this is not the joy here mentioned. It is joy in the Holy Ghost. From union of spirit with God's Spirit, God's joy is really re-produced in us. Christ said to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

- (2.) Joy, or rejoicing in God, is always an element of this kingdom of God in the soul. In this kingdom, God's joy, and righteousness, and peace, are so imparted to us by the Holy Ghost, that we are really conscious, not only of being partakers of his holiness and of his divine nature, but also of drinking of the river of his own pleasures or joys. Where righteousness and peace are, there religious joy, or joy in God will be.
- (3.) This joy is a rejoicing in God himself. It is not rejoicing in ourselves, either that we are good, or that we are saved, or that we are going to heaven. God is the direct object in which we rejoice. The contemplation of God, communion with God, fills the soul with joy unspeakable; and there is in the soul of the Christian a joy deep, abiding, perennial, even amidst the trials of this life. We have always in God the same reason for rejoicing in him; He is always the same glorious, loving, infinite object of joy. The mind that is in harmony with his will, cannot but enjoy his peace, and rejoice in him. Such a mind cannot be poor; such a mind cannot want the grounds and all the elements of rejoicing. Indeed, religious joy always will be where religion is. Religion being supreme love to God and equal love to man, religion consisting in a cordial embracing of God's whole character, and will, and way, it cannot be that there shall not always be joy. And even in the midst of sorrows there will be a deep religious joy; in the midst of the trials of life, in the midst of temptations, in the midst of persecutions, and even in the article of death, there is joy, joy in God.
- (4.) The mind that is devoted to God cannot be deprived of religious joy. Religious joy necessarily springs up in the very exercise of love, and faith, and gratitude. It is the natural and certain result of a truly religious state of mind. Nay, it is an element of this state of mind; it essentially belongs to a truly devout state of mind.

REMARKS.

1. This, then, must be a matter of consciousness. A religion of which we could not be conscious, could not be of much importance to us, at any rate. If we did not know whether we had it or not, surely it could not be worth having, so far as we are concerned.

But the fact is, if we can be conscious of anything, we can be, and must be, conscious of the kingdom of God existing within us.

Just think! the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and yet, I can remember the time when it was thought a very dark and suspicious circumstance if a person expressed great confidence that he was a Christian. It was gravely suspected by even grave divines, that such a one was not acquainted with his heart; but to express great doubts with respect to one's own conversion, was regarded as an evidence of profound humility. And we would frequently hear the very excellent Mr. So and So, and Dr. Such a One, spoken of as having so many doubts as to whether

they were Christians. Now we might earnestly and prayerfully ask, were did such views of religion come from?

2. It must also be a matter of observation, in the sense, as I have said, that the kingdom of God within a man must reveal itself in his outward life, temper, and spirit; in his business transactions; in his social and domestic relations; in his public relations; and indeed, in every relation of life.

If the kingdom of God is within him, he is an upright man; he is a benevolent man; he is a man devoted to the service of God, and to the interests of man. In business he is equitable, in politics he is honest and honorable, in every relation he is a Christian.

3. How very different is this account of the religion of Jesus, from the experience narrated in the seventh chapter of Romans, which is plainly a legal experience, in which the kingdom of God is not set up, but is striving to get possession of the heart. The eighth chapter of Romans portrays an experience in which the kingdom of God is set up in the heart; in which "the righteousness of God is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

But the seventh of Romans is an experience the opposite of the eighth. Here it is all bondage, resolution, purpose, and failing. Here, instead of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, the soul is bound fast in the cords of its own sins; floundering in a pit of mire and clay, and having neither righteousness, nor peace, nor joy in the Holy Ghost. And yet, strange to tell, this seventh of Romans has been regarded as Christian experience by a great portion of the church for centuries. There is reason to fear that millions of souls have stopped in the seventh of Romans, taking it for granted that they were converted, having mistaken conviction for conversion, and have gone down to hell.

4. How different is this account of the kingdom of God in consciousness, from the peaceless religion of a great many professors. They have no peace of mind. They are restless, restive, chafing, complaining, murmuring, resisting, and are in a constant state of turmoil and agitation in regard to their relations to God. Indeed, they know that they have no peace of mind; they know that God's whole will is not cordially accepted by them; they know that they are living in the neglect of known duty; they know that they are shunning the cross daily; they know that they are not universally devoted to God; they know that they are not devoted to the interests of men. Of course peace is impossible to them, and they are aware that they have not this peace of mind, and this state of cordiality between themselves and God. And yet they think themselves Christians! But the kingdom of God is not within them, for Christ does not reign in their hearts, and they are in no sense prepared for heaven. Now if the kingdom of God is not within them, why should they call themselves Christians?

It is very common for persons in this state to fall back, and say, they have no dependence except upon Christ; but they depend on Christ. But surely, this is a mistake. They do not truly depend on Christ, unless Christ has really set up his throne within their hearts. If they have true faith in Christ, they have true peace, they have true righteousness, they have true joy in the Holy Ghost; but wanting these, it is a sheer delusion to say that they depend on Christ.

But they say, I do not depend on anything within myself. I do not depend on my prayers, on my own righteousness, on my peace of mind, on my joy, or upon any experience I have. No, I answer, you should not depend on any of these as the ground of your acceptance with God. But as the condition of your going to heaven, as being that without which you cannot go to heaven you must depend on this righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. This state of mind is that without which you can never go to heaven.

However perfect it may be, it is not that for which, on the ground of justice, you could be admitted to heaven, but it is that without which heaven is a natural impossibility to you.

Do not, therefore, I pray you, say, O, I am to be saved by grace, therefore I lay no stress upon my own holiness. But I ask you, my dear sir, what is salvation? Is not an element of salvation personal holiness, or righteousness? True, if saved at all, you are saved by grace. But mark! to be saved by grace is to be made holy by grace, to be made righteous by grace. It is to have by grace, the very state of mind which the text describes, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Let no one then pretend to fall back upon Christ who does not suffer Christ to reign in his heart. The religion of many is sheer Antinomianism. They really suppose that they are going to be saved by an imputed without an imparted righteousness.

They know that they are living in the daily indulgence of sin; that they do shun the cross, and always have done so; that they never have made a clean breast of confession, or washed their hands by restitution; in short, they have never become personally upright, honest, holy, and yet they think they are going to be saved by Christ! They say, we have believed, and therefore we are forgiven and accepted. They think that by one act of faith they come into a state of perpetual justification.

But this is naked Antinomianism. If this be true, then the law must indeed be repealed and abolished; for if the moral law remains in force, the soul must be condemned if it indulges in sin.

5. How different is the religion of this text from the joyless religion of multitudes of professors. Indeed, it is mournfully common to see professors of religion who seldom or never profess any religious joy. It is no wonder they do not, for they themselves will admit that they are living in the constant indulgence of known sin. In this state, true religious joy is entirely out of the question.

If in this state they have any joy, it will be rejoicing in themselves; in their own supposed safety, and not in God. A joyless religion is a very repulsive religion.

6. To have this kingdom of God in consciousness is indispensable to our rightly teaching religion. I say teaching religion. We may warn others of their danger; we may prove to them their guilt; we may hold forth the threatenings, and even the promises; we may teach them the doctrines, but this is not teaching them religion, it is not presenting to them religion. It is teaching them certain things about religion, or rather, saying certain things of religion. But religion is a state of mind, a voluntary state, a state of love, with which joy and peace are necessarily connected. Now unless we have this joy and peace, it is impossible that we should convey a correct idea of what religion is.

If we do not ourselves love, if we have not ourselves peace and joy, if we attempt to preach religion we shall continually betray ourselves, and show that we are preaching but a hearsay gospel, and trying to teach a religion which we do not experimentally understand.

The fact is, experience always has a language of its own, and this language can never be supplied by any theory. Truly to preach peace and good will, they must be a matter of personal experience and consciousness; truly to preach joy, the heart must be flowing with it.

7. The experience of this kingdom in consciousness, is essential to rightly living it before the world. It cannot be really counterfeited. A man may be very sanctimonious in his outward life and in his looks, in his words and tones; but after all there will be cant in it, there will be something unnatural, it will be a manifest affection. To be lived, Christianity must be experienced. If it be in the heart, it will be looked, it will be acted, it will be spoken; it will be made manifest in the very tones of the voice, in an obliging manner, in pains-taking to honor God and to do good to men. It will be unselfish, honest, generous, cheerful, joyful. But these things cannot be so counterfeited as to set well upon a man.

8. Where this consciousness really exists it will produce conviction. It cannot conceal itself; it will be noticeable in any relation of life.

A husband will notice it in his wife; he will be struck with it; it will produce conviction. A wife will be struck with it in her husband; parents in children, and children in parents; and in every relation of life, it will produce conviction.

Religion is a thing so diverse from the spirit of this world, the kingdom of God is so opposite to the kingdoms of this world, and to the kingdom of Satan, that where it is really set up in any heart it must so express itself in the life, and temper and spirit, as to force conviction wherever it has an opportunity really to manifest itself.

9. If the human soul has not this consciousness, it will of course seek worldly good. To seek for happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment, is natural to man; and he will either seek his own selfishly, or he will seek the general good unselfishly. If the kingdom of God is established in him, he is an unselfish devotee to the glory of God and the good of man. In this he will find his enjoyment, here he will find the truest enjoyment, and the highest kind of enjoyment.

In this state of mind he does not seek his own enjoyment as an end; but he inevitably finds it. In this state of mind, he does not seek his own peace, nor his own joy, these are not the objects of his search, nor the end at which he aims; yet he inevitably finds them while he does not seek, and all the more surely because he does not seek them. But if a man has not this enjoyment, if he has not happiness in God, he will seek it in the world. It is in vain to shut him up to a truly religious life, unless this kingdom be established in his heart. If converts stop short of this consciousness, they will surely turn back.

10. If the soul has this satisfaction in God, it will not go lusting after worldly good, It has found a joy too sublime, too high, too spiritual, too all-pervading, to leave the mind restless and craving after worldly good. It will not lust for worldly pleasure and worldly ways; it will not plead for merely

worldly amusements, and pastimes, and social intercourse. No! it has found the society of God; it has entered into communion with him; it resides in the same palace with the King of Kings. It has an altar, and a worship, and a sanctuary, within itself; it is at home when engaged in the worship and service of God. But deprive the soul of this satisfaction in God, and you cannot keep it; it will go abroad, inquiring, "Who will show us any good?"

11. True converts will soon learn to watch unto prayer, that they may pray in the Holy Ghost, and thus keep themselves in the love of God. At first, converts are not aware how easily they can mar their own peace; how easily they can throw themselves out of sympathy with God; how easily they can bring a cloud over their souls and wound their own spirits. But if they are really converted, have the kingdom of God in consciousness, they will soon learn what wounds, what brings darkness, what mars their union with God, what disturbs their peace, what separates them from that clear and heavenly union without which they cannot live. They will soon learn the necessity of watchfulness, of much prayerfulness, of engaging as little as is consistent with duty in promiscuous conversation. They will learn to guard against idle words, vain conversation, worldly associations, a mis-spending of their time, a misuse of their money, a misuse of their tongue -- in short they will learn to gird themselves up, and to walk softly with God. They will find this indispensable to their peace, indispensable to their joy, indispensable to their maintaining their righteousness. They will soon learn that they must either part with God, or part with sin; that they must gird up their loins, and live wholly a religious, devoted life, or they can never have religious joy and righteousness and peace at all.

12. Spurious conversions may generally be known by their not realizing the necessity of watchfulness and prayer, and constant communion with God.

It shows that they have not tasted of the grace of God; that they have not had communion with God; that they have not known what it is to be born of God, and to have the kingdom of God set up within them.

By watching the tendency of professed converts, we may generally tell whether true religion is really a matter of experience with them. If we find them loose in the use of their tongues, unwatchful, running hither and thither to please themselves, not caring to spend much time in prayer, not disposed to search their Bibles, not tender and easily wounded by any slip or sin into which they may fall -- we may know they are not truly converted; the King has not set up his throne in their hearts; holiness to the Lord is not written there; they know not what it is to walk and commune with God.

13. Sinners know that this which I have described must be true religion, and must be what they themselves need.

In preaching at a certain place I was discoursing upon religion as an experience; upon the love of God, the peace and joy of the salvation of Christ. As I came out of the pulpit, I was met at the foot of the pulpit stairs by a prominent lawyer, a stranger to me, who wished to be introduced to me. He said to me: "Mr. Finney, after tea, I wish you would make a religious call with me, I wish to introduce you to a friend of mine." I replied, "I suppose it is for a religious purpose." He answered yes. I told him I should be happy to accompany him. He called on me after tea, and took me to the house of his friend, and introduced me to an aged lady, who immediately expressed great joy to see me, and began to tell

me what the Lord had done for her soul.

She poured out a sweet religious experience in a conversation of half an hour. Her joy was overflowing. She said the very atmosphere she breathed seemed to be love.

This lawyer sat where I could look him in the face without appearing to do so. I had learned that he was not a religious man. I saw the muscles of his face quiver; that it was with difficulty that he could suppress his emotions while the old lady was pouring off from her full heart this flood of religious experience.

After hearing what she had to say, we rose up and took our leave. As we stepped out into the street, he stepped before me and said, "See there! what do you think of that? I know that that is the Christian religion; I know that that is what I need, and I never was so determined not to rest short of it as I am now."

Thus I have found it common, when preaching religion as a matter of experience and consciousness, to find it carrying conviction to the minds even of the most skeptical. I have often heard of their saying -- "There, I understand that now; I see that is and must be true religion; this is what we all need, or certainly we cannot go to heaven."

14. Without this experience, we cannot enjoy what we call religious duties. If we attempt to perform them without this experience, we shall do it only as a task, as a matter of habit, or something that must not be neglected; yet as something in which we have no true satisfaction. But with this experience, prayer is a real luxury, and we will love to multiply occasions of prayer. So great is the enjoyment of communion with God, so sacred, so calm, so divinely serene and satisfying, that the soul is never, in this world, so deeply satisfied as when in the deepest communion with God.

Religious conversation with truly spiritual persons is a feast of the soul in which the kingdom of God is set up.

15. Labor, pains-taking, and even self-denial, for the salvation of souls and the glory of God, is spontaneous; is the natural outburst of an inward flame of love, an inward spring of joy and peace where the kingdom of God is set up.

But where this kingdom is not, much prayer is a great burden; persons are shy of religious conversations, they have no heart to it; and labor for souls and with souls is what they can hardly bring themselves to do. It is a real cross to go and labor personally with souls, a real trial, a matter of fearfulness and timidity, where the kingdom of God is not truly set up in the soul. Men are ashamed and afraid to go and labor earnestly with their neighbors for the salvation of their souls, while they themselves are in bondage, and have no real experience of what they teach. Even ministers are ashamed to labor directly and personally with souls, if they have not this kingdom of God burning within them.

16. Without peace and joy we cannot earnestly and honestly recommend religion. If our religion is a bondage, void of peace and joy in God, we may warn others of their danger and their guilt; we can

commend religion to them as a matter of personal prudence, as a thing not to be neglected, lest they should lose their souls; but we cannot recommend it in such a sense as to draw people out of the world into a present embracing of it. The fact is, man wants enjoyment for the present; he wants something now to interest him; he wants something that he can now feel, now realize, now interest himself in; and now find some satisfaction in. But if we have not this peace and joy, all our representations will naturally repel rather than attract the mind.

They will admit -- "O it is something we must attend to, but not now. Your religion is a necessity, we admit, some time before we die. We intend to become religious; but it is religion to die by, and not to live by. It is something to be associated with death-beds, and funerals, and mournful occasions; and not something in which we can find a present interest, enjoyment, and unction.

17. This is the true and only antidote to worldly-mindedness.

With this kingdom of God set up in his heart, a man is crucified to the world, and can well afford that the world should be crucified to him. With this love, peace, and joy in experience, he will naturally turn away and hide himself in God, rather than mix up unnecessarily with the bustle, the strife, the bitterness, the slang, and egotism, and insanity of this world.

There are many that stop short of this experience in consciousness; and of course if they are professors of religion, they make up the masses who are pleading for worldly enjoyment, for social intercourse, for the cultivation of worldly taste. They run after amusements, they journey, they do everything to find enjoyment. They must see sights, they must hear music, they must frequent musical entertainments, they must get up worldly pastimes and parties; these things they will seek because they have nothing better in experience.

If we ask why is it that the great mass of professors of religion are so worldly-minded, the answer is at hand -- they have not the kingdom of God in consciousness.

Not being rooted and grounded in love; not having the peace of God ruling in their hearts, not having the joy of God a perpetual fountain welling up within them, how can it be expected that they will not do as they do?

But the most surprising thing is, that these worldly professors still hold on to the idea that they are truly religious. If they would be consistent, and say, "why we have no religion; we have no consciousness of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; we have no joy in God, and do you expect to deprive ourselves of all enjoyment? We have no satisfaction in our religious experience; and do you expect to deprive us of seeking satisfaction elsewhere? We know not God, and therefore we must have the world." Now if they would say this, and be consistent, they would cease to be stumbling blocks; people would understand them. The world would not hide behind them; they would not then be a standing contradiction of religion, and a shocking dishonor to Christ; for in that case they would avow their unreligious character.

But as it is, strange to tell, they will maintain their religious profession. They think themselves really religious. But they are not religious. They seek the world, and lust after it, simply because they have

no religion in consciousness.

18. It is easy, therefore, for us to discriminate between those who love God and those who love him not.

They in whose heart the kingdom of God is established, follow on to know the Lord more and more perfectly. They are under the influence of a divine charm or enchantment; the love of Christ is constraining them. They have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious; why should they turn back and lust after the flesh-pots of Egypt? Why should they gad about to seek love? They have found the home of their hearts in Christ. They have found their resting place, their joyful habitation, their all-satisfying portion. They cannot exchange these spiritual joys for the gross pleasures of earth; they cannot exchange these sacred moments of communion with God for communion with this world; they cannot afford to abandon God's heavenly ways for the insane ways of a wicked world.

19. But lastly, do any of you ask, how shall I come to have this experience of the kingdom of God in my soul?

The answer is plain and scriptural: Receive Christ, open your heart. He says, "Behold, 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."

Give him the key of the whole habitation, of every room and every closet, and let him cleanse the whole -- cleanse every apartment; and write "Holiness to the Lord," upon every wall, and every ceiling, and every door, and everything within. Open your heart, and commit yourself to him for this very purpose, that he may write his law and establish his throne forever within you. Do it now, submit to this now. Invite him in; lay all upon his altar, and ask him to baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Looking To Jesus

Lecture IX

June 5, 1861

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Heb. 12:1-2: "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."

In this text, an allusion is plainly made to the foot races that were run as an exercise to develop strength. At the time of the writing of this epistle, and for a long time previous, it had been the custom of the Government of the East to celebrate certain athletic games; of which the foot race was one.

In those days, armies fought hand to hand; and therefore the prowess and power of an army depended not merely upon its courage, but also upon its real physical strength. Hence, it was the policy of Government in every way to develop to the utmost the physical strength of their subjects.

They established at certain periods, the celebration of games, with great pomp, ceremony, and expense; and these games brought out the exhibition of muscular strength. The apostle, in his writings, makes frequent allusions to these games, for the purpose of illustrating certain great truths of the Christian religion; and it is with reference to these games that he so frequently speaks of the Christian life as a race, and as a battle. In these races, the race-grounds were often prepared with great expense. Seats were built along the course from the beginning to the end; and these seats rose one above another in such a manner that those that sat upon the back seats could see the runners as well as those that sat in front. Upon these seats were piled vast multitudes -- often scores of thousands of people; the seats rising one above another till they appeared like a great cloud, such masses of human beings were present as spectators.

Between these rows of seats lay the race grounds. As they proceeded in the race, they were cheered on by the shouts and enthusiasm of the crowds on either side that were seated to witness the race.

At the end of the race course sat the judge; whose business it was to observe accurately how they came out, and to award the prize to the one that first reached the end of the course.

In the eleventh chapter, the apostle had been giving us a great number of examples of the nature and power of faith. Beginning with Abel, he quotes numerous examples all through the patriarchal age, and many instances of eminent faith among the prophets and holy men of the Jewish nation.

Of these he speaks as witnesses of the Christian race of those to whom he is addressing his epistle. He here assumes that the saints who have passed from this world are greatly interested in the Christian career and the progress of those left behind. Hence he addresses as he does those to whom he is writing, in the first verse of this twelfth chapter: "Wherefore," says he, "seeing we also are compassed 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." And then in the second verse: "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."

The race here spoken of is plainly the Christian race; the cloud of witnesses are the saints of God; the judge who awards the crown is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In speaking further from these words, I inquire,

I. What it is to look to Jesus in the sense that is here intended.

II. Things that are implied in this looking to Jesus.

III. What we are to look to Jesus for.

IV. Several mistakes into which many fall upon this subject.

I. What it is to look to Jesus in the sense that is here intended.

- 1. The connection in which we find these words plainly shows that the primary idea in the apostle's mind, was the contemplation of Jesus as our example. "Looking," he says, "to 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." The primary idea, then, in the apostle's mind, of looking in this sense, is to consider and contemplate His character, how He endured under all the trials through which He passed.

Every Christian is aware that he often renews his strength by means of divine contemplation; giving his mind up to consider the character, the sufferings, the works, the perfections, the fullness of Christ. He finds himself strengthened in His patience, in His power of endurance, and in all the graces of a Christian by divine contemplation.

The original word implies, to see clearly, to apprehend distinctly, or so to consider as clearly to understand a thing.

- 2. But there is another sense in which we are to look to Jesus. It is here said that He is "the author and finisher of our faith," and as such we are to look to Him.

This, then, implies looking in the sense of depending on Him as the author and finisher of our faith. That is, He is the author of the system of truth which faith embraces; He is the great object of faith.

But in the sense also of begetting or inducing faith in us, we are exhorted to look to Him. By revealing Himself to us by the Holy Ghost, He induces faith in us.

The exercise is one of our own mind; but it is induced or brought into exercise by the inward revelation of Christ to the soul.

But in order to have this divine revelation to us, we are not to act as machines, but voluntarily to consider, to dwell upon, to think upon, to give ourselves up to contemplate all that the Bible says of Christ; and in this act of contemplation we find Him revealing Himself to us so as to beget and sustain our faith.

- 3. We are to look to Him in the sense of imploring His grace. We can all understand what is to give an imploring look.

It should be understood that it is always the mind that really looks. The mind looks through the eye; but it is the mind, and not the fleshly organ, the eye, that sees or looks. The mind sees physical objects by means of the eye; and the state of the mind often

reveals itself in the use that it makes of the bodily organ, the eye.

See that sick child. It is unable to speak; but its mother passes through the room, and it wants something. It cannot speak, or perhaps so much as raise its hand; but it turns its eye -- the mother sees its look -- she understands it at once. It wants something; the imploring state of the mind instantly reveals itself in the look of the eye. Its eye is directed first to the mother, and then to the object -- perhaps some water, or something that the child needs. The mother understands it. The child cannot speak, but it can look unutterable things.

So the soul can give Jesus an imploring look. It looks to Him for the supply of its wants.

But not only can the soul look to Him in the sense of giving Him an imploring look, but also in the sense of giving Him a confiding look, or in the sense of relying on Him.

A father sends a son to college; the son says, "father, I look to you to pay my bills." That is, he expects it of him; he has no other dependence, no other reliance. He confidently expects his father, who has sent him to college, to meet his wants.

Whenever his term bills or board bills become due, he looks to his father to pay them; that is, he depends on his father in the sense of expecting it from him.

II. I must consider some things that are implied in this looking to Jesus.

- 1. This looking is an active, and not a passive looking. It is not that sitting still that we sometimes see in people who profess to depend on Christ.

The connection in which this text stands is very suggestive. The games, to which allusion is here made, were anything but a state of apathy or inaction. On the contrary, they were a state of the utmost exertion.

- 2. But looking to Jesus, in the sense of this text, implies the looking away from everything else; shutting out the consideration of other objects of thought, and making Him the great object of thought and attention.
- 3. It implies looking earnestly, fixing the full and earnest attention of the mind upon Him.
- 4. It implies depending upon Him, while we put forth the utmost endeavors, just as in those races. Suppose a man were so situated that he was obliged to swim a river; while he might perhaps know that his own strength would not be sufficient to carry him across. Now, if he must cross, he might cast himself in and make an earnest effort to swim over; at the same time expecting divine aid in the endeavor, throwing himself upon God for support to renew and sustain his strength till he should reach the opposite shore. Here the looking to God would not be a passive looking, to be carried across without any effort of his own; but it would be a depending on Him, while we ourselves make earnest endeavor and use all our powers to the best advantage.

Now it is very plain that we are thus exhorted to look to Jesus, while we earnestly endeavor to do all our duty. But looking in the sense of this text, that is, a right looking to Jesus, implies also,

- 5. The renunciation of the spirit of disobedience, and the committing of ourselves to full obedience; expecting from Him all the aid of every kind, and in every degree, that we need in order that we may come up to the full measure of entire obedience.
- 6. This looking to Him implies that we make Him the great object of study, reflection, and contemplation; that thus beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory.
- 7. Looking to Jesus in the sense of the text implies, beyond doubt, the committing of the soul to Him, as the Bible elsewhere expresses it, "in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator;" committing ourselves to full obedience; to take up every cross, to break off from all ungodliness, and deny every worldly lust; and to live wholly to God, making this the great object of our life, and looking to Him continually for support in securing this result.

III. I will inquire a little more particularly what we are to look to Jesus for.

- 1. We are to look to Him as an atoning priest; as offering such a sacrifice for our sin that we may expect forgiveness for His sake and in His name. The Bible abundantly teaches that as sinners we have no way of approach to God except through the great sin-offering, which Christ has offered as our high priest.
- 2. We are to look to Him as our advocate, to plead our cause before the throne of grace.
- 3. We are to look to Him for sympathy. Having been in all points tempted like as we are, He knows how to succor them that are tempted. He has been made perfect through suffering, that He might be a merciful and faithful high-priest. Having been in the flesh tempted in all points as we are, tried in every way, He knows how to sympathize with us; and we are to look to Him in the sense of believing and realizing that He does sympathize with us.
- 4. We are to look to Him for spiritual strength to overcome all the practical difficulties that lie in the way of our Christian life. We are to expect Him to work in us to will and to do.
- 5. We are to look to Him as our physician for spiritual healing.
- 6. In short, we may look to Him for all that we lack in ourselves. We lack wisdom, He is our wisdom, and we may look to Him for all the wisdom that we need. We lack righteousness, and in ourselves are nothing but a mass of corruption; but He is righteous, and He is our righteousness; and surely we may say, "The Lord, our righteousness."
- 7. We may look to Him for sanctification; for He is made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

- 8. We may look to Him for redemption from all iniquity; not only from the guilt of sin, but for deliverance from the further commission of sin. Whatever is wanting in us, we may expect of Him, and are exhorted to look to Him for. Let us understand this.

IV. Lastly, I must consider several mistakes into which many fall upon this subject.

- 1. They do not look to Jesus in the sense of earnestly contemplating Him. They do not make Him the object of study. They study almost everything else, read about everything else and everybody else, and make almost anything an object of deep consideration rather than Christ. They do not consider, in the sense of contemplating, His love, its nature; that it is good-will or a disposition to do them all the good He can. They do not consider its extent, that it is really infinite. They do not consider the unchangeableness -- that it is not an emotion that effervesces and then subsides; but an unchangeable, infinite, intense disposition to do them all the good that they are capable of receiving.

Again, they do not contemplate His ability, that it is absolutely infinite; and that whatever He has promised to do He has well considered, and knows Himself to be able to do.

Many persons seem intent on limiting the ability of Jesus. They think, how can He do this? and how can He do that? and He cannot do so and so, unless I do so and so; and after all they seem to suppose that unless they originate some goodness in themselves, and thus recommend themselves to Him by some self-originated goodness, they cannot expect favors of Him. It is very common to hear people talk about the ability of God: that He cannot do this and cannot do that, instead of assuming at once that nothing is too hard for Him. We hear a great deal about natural laws; that if a person sins He must bear the penalty of course; that the natural consequences come, and cannot be averted; hence, that God cannot heal our diseases, either of body or mind; that He cannot sanctify us unless we consent, as if our consent were not the very thing that He has engaged to secure.

Many people seem intent upon reasoning themselves out of their faith by queries about what Jesus is able to do. But many who admit His ability, after all do not contemplate and thoroughly recognize His willingness to do exceeding abundantly for us above all that we ask or think. We need to consider the history of Christ, the promises of Jesus, the whole character of Jesus, in order to be fully satisfied of His willingness to give us grace equal to our day.

Again, many do not consider His readiness. They in some sense admit His ability, and they think, upon the whole, that He is willing, that is, that He will be willing at some time; but they do not consider that He is now willing, that He is ready, and that now is the accepted time with Him and now the day of salvation.

We cannot over-estimate the importance of making Jesus the object of intense study. We need to take the Bible and search it, and see what we may expect of Him; consider His promises, their nature, and their extent; consider His veracity and all His attributes, and thus arm ourselves against the suggestions of the tempter. It is a great mistake to contemplate other things so much, and to look at other things so much, and so little at

Jesus.

I have found even my theological studies a snare to me, sometimes, when I have kept my mind too much occupied with the philosophy of doctrine, and the philosophy of religion, and have not made the personal Christ the object of contemplation and study.

The great thing we need is to understand Him, to know Him, to know Him personally, to know all we can about Him. We get peace of mind only as we acquaint ourselves with Him; we get divine strength only as we acquaint ourselves with Jesus. I wish I were able sufficiently to impress this thought, the indispensable necessity of studying Jesus.

- 2. Many make the mistake of not looking to Him in the sense of expecting from Him the things that He has permitted.

Suppose a son did not expect his father to provide for him. Suppose he knew that his father was abundantly able; but he had not such confidence in his willingness as actually to expect that his father would fulfill to him his promises. Now I fear that a great many persons do not really expect Jesus to fulfill to them His promises.

We often use the term "look" in this sense. A son, in speaking to his father of his dependence on him, and of his expectation that he would meet his wants and pay his college bills, would naturally say, "Father, I look to you for support." That is, I depend on you; my mind is directed to you as the source whence these things come.

Now we should always remember that we are to look to Jesus in the sense of expecting from Him the fulfillment of all His promises.

We are to expect forgiveness or justification by and through Him. In short, we are to expect Him to be to us all that is implied in the relation which He sustains to us. We are to expect this with confidence; we should rest in the assurance that thus He will do, and thus He will be to us; and just so far as we fall short of this confidence, this rest and expectation, we fall short of looking to Him for these things.

If a child should ask his father for a farm, not expecting his father to grant it, he could not properly be said to look to his father for it.

He may look to his father with a sense of want -- he may know that he can get the farm nowhere else -- he may realize his dependence on his father -- he may entreat his father to give him the thing that he needs; but he cannot be properly said to look to him for it, unless he has the expectation of receiving the thing from his father. So it is with Jesus. The soul may feel its wants, and may know that these wants might be supplied by Jesus, and cannot be supplied by any one else; and yet it may lack the faith, the expectation upon which its receiving those blessings is conditioned.

- 3. Another mistake into which many fall is, they do not assume the sincerity of all His professions, and the reality of all His relations. I say assume. When we walk upon the solid

earth, we assume without hesitation that the earth is strong enough to bear us. We do not wait to prove it, we assume it.

Business men assume the reality and integrity of all the laws of nature; mechanics assume the reality, integrity, and stability of all the laws of mechanics; the farmer assumes the reality, integrity, and stability of all the laws of the vegetable kingdom.

Now in these cases men assume the reality, integrity, validity, and stability of the laws, without being aware of the assumption. Yet their confidence in them is implicit, and they act accordingly.

Again, a child assumes the reality and strength of a parent's love. It also assumes the ability, the willingness, and the truthfulness of the parent. Hence the little child is not uneasy whether it shall be provided for. It goes and comes with the parent, hither and thither without questioning, feeling secure because it assumes the love, the integrity, the ability, the faithfulness of the parent.

This assumption underlies the individual acts of looking for this favor and that favor. The child making this assumption, and continuing thus to assume the love of the parent, the sincerity, the ability and willingness of the parent, is enabled by reason of this assumption to look for the individual things it wants from day to day. This assumption is the condition of its trusting in the individual promises of the parent, and of its trusting the parent for all the details of blessings that it needs.

But for this assumption, the child would be in a continual worry lest it should be neglected, forgotten, and should suffer. Without this assumption it could not confidently expect of the parent the daily blessings that it knows itself to need.

Now here is a great fault of many professed Christians. They do not assume that Jesus loves them; they do not take it for granted, as a settled fact, never to be questioned. They seem somehow or other to think, that after all, His love for them depends on their first loving Him; and do not seem to understand as a practical fact that He has loved them with an everlasting love; and that He loved them before they loved Him; and if they ever have loved Him, it is because He first loved them, and drew them with loving-kindness.

Unless we really assume, and take for granted as a settled fact, the love of Christ -- the sincerity of all His professions -- that the things professed are realities, and that all His professions are true, that all His promises were made in good faith, and designed to be fulfilled, and made for our use -- unless they are settled in the sense of being fixed assumptions in which the mind rests, we shall find ourselves unable to trust His individual promises.

One reason why some people neglect the promises, is because they have no confidence in them; and the reason that they have no confidence in them, is because they have no confidence in the love, the veracity, the sincerity, the faithfulness of Jesus in making and keeping them. Thus they fail to look to Jesus for the things He has promised them,

because they have no expectation of receiving them if they do.

- 4. Many persons do not look to be saved from the commission of sin. They expect to live on in sin, but hope that Christ will forgive them in the end. They seem to look to Him as an atoning Savior, a justifying Savior; but what they expect from Him seems to be something in the future -- that He will at last forgive and justify them; but they fail to look to Him for present redemption from iniquity. They seem to overlook the fact that this is His present great business with us, to save us from our sins; that this is the very point of His mission with us in this world.
- 5. Many persons do look to Him in the sense of expecting in some measure to be saved from sin in this life. They expect to be saved from great, disgraceful, and outbreaking sins; but they fail to look to Him for full redemption.

They trust that Christ will not suffer them greatly to dishonor Him, by any grievous departure from a Christian life; that He will not suffer them to fall into those forms of sin that will expose them to excommunication, and to universal contempt; but they do not look to Him for redemption from all and every sin, from evil tempers, from idle words, from pride, and all the workings of iniquity in their minds; they do not expect Him to deliver them from them all.

I have recently been reading the life of Miss Adelaide Newton, a young English lady, whose memoir has been published in this country. I have been struck in reading it with the fact that it seems never to have occurred to her to look to Jesus for present redemption from all sin. Like many other memoirs, her diary and her published letters abound with complaints about her sins and with expressions of joy that ultimately she should be delivered from sin.

But after all, her history was rather a history of bondage than of Christian liberty, of hope and expectation of escape from sin after death. Such had been her teaching, that she regarded her whole nature as a mass of sin, everywhere confounding temptation with sin; and although she lived an earnest life, yet so far as deliverance from sin was concerned, it was a desponding life.

The dear child suffered a great deal from her false instruction in regard to the present power and willingness of Christ to save her from sin.

Some passages in her published letters indicate that she had at times almost got hold of Christ as her sanctification, in the sense of being her present Savior from sin; but then she immediately gets the idea of Christ as her sanctification, in the sense of an imputed sanctification.

She seems not to have known Christ as a power in her soul, or present redemption from iniquity.

This book is in many respects a good one; but poor Adelaide's experience stops right where so many experiences do -- they go no farther than to a hope for the future, without

realizing any present rest of soul in redemption from sin.

- 6. Many make a mistake in looking for peace and pardon, before repentance and faith. They are making peace and pardon the great subject of endeavor. Now peace will come without asking for; and pardon is extended of course, the moment we repent and believe. The act of pardon, or of amnesty, is already passed. God has decreed that whoever repents and believes in Jesus is forgiven; we avail ourselves of the provisions of this act or decree, whenever we repent.

Peace and pardon are things of course, that always come whenever the indispensable conditions are fulfilled. We cannot too fully understand this; the thing that we need to consider is, Christ our righteousness, Christ our life, Christ our wisdom; that all these we have in Christ; that He is our peace; that He is our pardon, our justification; that in Him we have it all; and that to acquaint ourselves with Him in these relations, is to obtain the peace and the pardon that we seek.

- 7. Many make the mistake of not looking to Jesus in the sense of looking away from themselves.

As I said in the beginning of this discourse, the word look in the original, implies the looking to Him solely; or looking away from other things and other objects, and looking to Him in the sense of expecting from Him alone the things that we need. It is a curious fact that there seems to be a constant tendency in the mind of man to look to self. For instance, you will find men trying to make out their own innocence; and even Christian men will often try to make out their innocence, either in a general way or in some particular matter. If they can make out that they are innocent, and do not transgress willfully they feel encouraged; and a great many seem to rely more upon the fact that they do not deserve to be punished, do not deserve to be sent to hell, than they do upon Christ. They seem bent upon establishing, in some way, either their entire innocence, or their comparative innocence. How many persons we find, who, though they think they trust in Christ, yet are most manifestly building their hope upon the fact that they have not been very ill-deserving. Indeed, many professors of religion seem to be looking in this direction for rest and repose. They dwell upon their general honesty, integrity, and sincerity, their general faithfulness in duty, perhaps their usefulness; and then again, they look at their sins, and think of them in cases where they cannot but know that they have greatly sinned; and thus dwelling on their duties or their sins, they are either greatly encouraged or discouraged. If they cannot excuse themselves, you find them dejected or cast down; but if they can satisfy themselves that their intentions were right, then they are encouraged; and after all, it would seem as if they were considering their own righteousness, at least their own innocence, rather than Jesus as their wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

It is often curious to see professors of religion, and even professors of years' standing, making the sad mistake of looking to their duties, their faithfulness, or their unfaithfulness, their usefulness or their uselessness, their sins or their innocence -- contemplating these things, and encouraging or discouraging themselves accordingly. The human heart seems exceedingly slow to abandon every form of self-dependence.

- 8. Many fail to look to Jesus with a look of appreciation and appropriation. They do not appreciate His fullness. It does not seem to them that His fullness is infinite. They do not appreciate His fullness. They dwell upon their sins, and upon their wants, until they come practically to doubt whether there is sufficient grace in Christ to meet all their wants for time and eternity.
- 9. Many fall into the mistake of dwelling upon their dependence on Christ, while they fail really to depend on Him, to lean and cast themselves upon Him.

There is a great difference between feeling our dependence, and really depending. A child may feel his dependence upon his father for support; but he could only really depend on him in the sense of expecting him to support him.

He may refuse to depend on him. He may be so wicked, and have such a sense of unworthiness in regard to his treatment of his father, as to despair of help from him. He may know that he needs the help, and that his father is able and willing to help him, and that he can get help nowhere else, but his pride or his unbelief may prevent his really depending on his father, for the things he is able to give, and perhaps has promised.

- 10. But I said that many fail to look to Jesus in the sense of looking away from other dependencies. Many persons seem to be looking to the prayers of others; to the prayers of their parents, or husbands, or wives, or friends. They seem to be looking this way, and that way, and every way rather than directly to Jesus. This is a great mistake. Until we look directly to Jesus, He will not help us. We must be cut off from other expectations; we must cease to look to our own duties, our own prayers or the prayers of others, we must cease to look in any other direction save towards Jesus. All looking in any other direction but delays the coming blessing.
- 11. Many look at their own weakness and infirmities rather than at Christ's strength. Many persons are given up to lamenting their own weaknesses, and infirmities, and sins; and they make them a subject of almost incessant thought. They look at themselves, -- they think of themselves, -- they take most discouraging views of themselves. They think it their duty to examine themselves; but in examining themselves in this way, they fail to look to Jesus.

They seem to lose sight of the fact that the fullness of Jesus is, in the gospel, set face to face, over against our infirmities, and sins, and weakness, and emptiness; that wherever there is a want in us, there is a supply and a sufficiency in Him. His fullness is set face to face to our emptiness; and we are expected to look to this fullness to fill our emptiness. Many persons seem to forget this. They keep their thoughts upon themselves, and their own wants; and although this fullness of Christ stands right over against their wants, waiting to be appropriated, urging its fullness upon our consideration, many are so taken up with the consideration of their own emptiness that they never look to this infinite fullness.

- 12. Many make the mistake of looking to Jesus in the sense of passively thinking of Him.

They think about Him; they read about Him; they hear about Him; they talk about Him,

but remain inactive. They do not look in the sense of appropriating whatever they see in Him that they need. They do not take hold of the truths as fast as they see them, and make them their own. They are like a man who sees provisions before him, yet does not put forth his hand to partake of them. He may see and contemplate this fullness of provision, and yet never partake of it.

But it should be understood, that the looking to which we are exhorted in the text, is an active looking; and a looking in the sense of an earnest expectation and endeavor.

- 13. Many make the mistake of looking to Jesus in the sense that really involves the idea of expecting a miracle from Him.

As an illustration, let me state a fact. A Christian brother told me he had had a very bad temper, and that he was often angry. He was told to look to Jesus to subdue this temper. He was greatly grieved with it at times, and often stumbled others; and accordingly he set himself to look to Jesus to subdue it. He expected that Jesus would subdue it by some operation on him. He did not resolutely make up his mind to set the whole force of his will against it. He did not make up his mind, in the strength of the Lord that he would not be angry again. He left it to Jesus to subdue his temper, expecting Him to come and subdue it by some operation upon him, and still he grew worse and no better. Finally, he asked himself, "Why should I wait in this way? I will not wait for anything -- I will not be angry again." He came thus at last to make up his mind not to wait for Jesus to perform a miracle, but to make an honest and an earnest endeavor to resist, depending on Jesus as the occasions might arise; and then he found that he had the victory. Jesus no doubt enabled him thus to make up his mind; but mark, he never prevailed over his temper till his mind was fully settled to set the whole force of his will against it, and not to yield to the temptation to be angry.

- 14. Many do not look to Jesus in the sense of considering His varied relations; and hence they do not find in Him what they need in all the circumstances of life. The Bible presents Him in a great variety of relations, suited to all our necessities and all our circumstances. It presents Him as our brother, our Savior, our king, our prophet, our wisdom, our righteousness, sanctification, redemption. Do we need an advocate? He is our advocate. Do we need a mediator? He is our mediator. Do we need one to sympathize with us? He is a merciful and faithful high priest, and able to succor us when we are tempted.

Indeed, Christians need to contemplate the official relations of Christ intensely; to apprehend and appreciate them thoroughly as realities, and the fullness there is in these relations; and to settle these things as matters of conviction and persuasion of mind, till the mind rests and settles down in them, and has the fullest assurance that they are all indeed true, and that in Christ they are complete. But too many fail to appreciate their completeness in Christ; and are constantly endeavoring to be complete in themselves -- to mix up something of their own with what they have in Christ -- to patch up His righteousness; and are constantly endeavoring to save themselves by their own goodness. All these are great mistakes.

The fact is, we do not expect enough of Christ. The more we expect from Him the better, if we can but enlarge our faith, we shall be sure to obtain of Him all that we need. Believe as much as we will, consider as much as we will, anticipate as much as we will -- when we have done all, we may be assured that He is able to do, and willing to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Profit and Loss; Or The Worth of The Soul- No.'s 1 & 2

Lectures X & XI

June 19, 1861

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--Mark 8:36: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Text.--Luke 9:25: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"

LECTURE X.

In speaking from these words, I first call attention to --

I. Several facts of consciousness and experience.

II. Show that the question suggested by the text is one of profit and loss.

III. What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?

IV. But how much would he lose, if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul?

V. Reverse the question in the text. What will it profit to lose the world and save your soul?

I. I first call attention to several facts of consciousness and experience.

- 1. That the human soul is immortal, seems to be one of the primitive beliefs of mankind. Certainly this belief has been well-nigh universal among men. We know by our own experience that men are hard to believe that to be true which they fear, or of which they have a dread.

All men are conscious of being sinners; and all men know themselves to deserve punishment. All men are aware that they are not dealt with as severely as they deserve to be in this life, hence the belief seems to be well-nigh, if not quite universal, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments. When we realize that men are guilty and know themselves deserving of punishment, we see at once that a future state of rewards and punishments must be to them a terrible idea. They would not believe in it were not the conviction forced upon them by their own nature; and hence it would seem from the fact of this universal conviction of the immortality of the soul, that such is the very nature of the soul as to force this belief upon the race of mankind.

- 2. Such a state is evidently demanded by the justice of God.

We irresistibly affirm that God is just. We cannot conceive of an unjust being as God; and the human soul revolts at, and indignantly rejects the idea that God is not just. A future state of rewards and punishments is an irresistible inference from the two facts, that men are not punished as they deserve to be in this world, and that God is a just moral governor.

If God is just, there must be a future state of rewards and punishments where men shall be dealt with according to their true characters.

- 3. The Bible affirms this irresistible conviction, or primitive belief of mankind; and abundantly teaches that the soul is immortal, that there is a state of future rewards and punishments.
- 4. I assume, therefore, the soul's immortality. Men seem to believe this truth, even if they deny it. Men that call it in question are after all afraid to meet God, afraid to die, afraid of the consequences of their sins in a future state. There is probably not a human being on the face of the earth, having a sound, well-balanced mind, who does not, at the bottom of his mind, assume and believe in a future state of rewards and punishments.

I say, I assume the soul's immortality: I do it because I cannot help assuming it; and I do it because everybody does assume it. Indeed, it is just because the nature of the soul forces this assumption upon mankind, that the Bible everywhere, in the Old Testament especially, assumes that men are aware of this, just as it assumes that God exists. The Bible does not begin by asserting the existence of God; it assumes it. So the moral government of God everywhere assumes that men know that they are under moral government; that the soul will exist in a future state; and that there is a future state of rewards and punishments.

I say, the Bible does not frequently, especially in the Old Testament, affirm this; but always and everywhere assumes it, because of its being an irresistible belief of mankind.

- 5. The soul must be happy or miserable as it is holy or sinful. The conscience affirms intuitively that misery ought to be the consequence of sin, and that happiness ought to be connected with holiness. Again, we have enough of experience in this life to indicate clearly that a sinful soul cannot be happy, and that a holy soul cannot be truly miserable. The reason is plainly this; the

soul was made to be holy; sin is a violation of its own laws, inconsistent with the nature of the soul. It turns the soul upon itself, and produces inward discord; throws it out of harmony with itself, and with the universe in which it dwells. It is a violation of conscience, and must necessarily make the soul miserable. Holiness, on the other hand, is the soul's harmony with itself and with the universe in which it lives, -- especially with God and all holy beings. Hence the soul is out of harmony, and miserable, if it is sinful, and in harmony and happy, if it is holy.

- 6. Cut off from the pleasures of sense, happiness or misery will naturally be as is the moral state of the soul. In the present state of existence there is much pleasure or pain connected with sense; but in the future state, there is no reason to believe that the pleasures and pains of sense will be at all as they now are, for the material organs will be removed.

Sinners take pleasure in some forms of sin, and have much in this life that they call happiness; but take them away from the brief pleasures of sense, and what can be the source of their enjoyment! Here they enjoy a degree of pleasure in spite of their sinfulness. But remove them from their friends, their business, their worldly pleasures, their associations in this life, -- and what then can make them happy? All the sources from which they received any enjoyment are cut off. They must then derive happiness or misery from the moral state of their souls, and the society in which they dwell. If holy, they will naturally be at peace; they will have the society of the holy, and will therefore be happy. If sinful, peace to them will be impossible; they will be surrounded with those of their own character, and must be miserable.

- 7. Progress is the law of finite existences; progress both in knowledge, and in sin and holiness. All finite creatures begin to be. They have their first thought, their first feeling; their faculties are gradually developed; and progress is the unalterable law of their existence. Having new thoughts and new experiences, and passing from one to another, and another forever, -- thus they accumulate new knowledge as long as they exist. Holiness is conformity to truth; sin is disconformity to truth. If the soul conforms itself to truth as fast as it is received, it is holy and grows in holiness. If on the contrary, it fails to conform to truth, and conforms itself to error, and is under the influence of lies, it violates its own nature and is miserable; and as knowledge increases, sin or holiness must increase as long as the soul exists. Again, as holiness or sin increases, so must happiness or misery increase. As sin is a violation of the laws of the soul's nature, therefore as sin increases, misery must increase. As holiness is conformity to the soul's nature, and conformity to truth, therefore as knowledge increases, and holiness increases, happiness must increase.

These are truths which most men will readily admit. They are so self-evident as not to need proof; they are in fact assumed by mankind in general.

Having premised these things, I proceed,

II. To show that the question suggested by the text is one of profit and loss.

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The question of profit and loss is one that is much agitated in this world; and it behooves us to apply this to the great question of the soul. Christ puts the question in all solemnity. Now the real question is, at which would we look in the first place? What is each worth to us? that is, what is the world's value to us, and what is the soul's value?

First, what is the real value of this world to us?

It is said that the richest man in the nation to which he belonged, was once complimented by a friend for his great wealth. This friend expressed the thought that he must be very happy in the enjoyment of his great wealth. He replied; "What will you ask to take the charge of all my business, and have all the care and concern of it, and relieve me of any concern about it?"

His friend replied, "I do not know." "But," said the rich man, "will you do it for your food and clothing? if you can be well fed, and well clothed, -- have just as much as you can eat, and drink, and wear?"

"O no!" said his friend, " I could not do it for that." "Well," responded the rich man, "this is all that I get."

Yes, this is all that we get for all our labor, and toil, and responsibility. So far as we are concerned, all that we can get from this world is our food and clothing, and drink.

It is also said of this same man, that near the close of life he was asked by another friend, what, upon the whole, he thought of his whole life. As he had been very successful in business, had accumulated great wealth, and had seemed to secure all that was desirable in this life, -- how his life appeared to him.

His answer was, "My life is a failure." What an answer!

But take the case of Solomon. Solomon set himself, it appears, purposely to see what could be gotten from this world, and what it was really worth. He had all the means of testing it that could be conceived of. He had greater wealth than any other man living. He tried what science could do; he surrounded himself with singing men and singing women; he made beautiful gardens; in short, he exhausted all the resources of wealth and all the pleasures of this life. He tried what could be obtained from every source of worldly enjoyment that we can conceive. He tells us, that he deliberately intended to test every source of worldly enjoyment, and to see what could be realized from it. He tried it to his heart's content, and then came to this mournful conclusion -- that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." This, then, is the best testimony that can be given of the value of the world to us. All that we can obtain from it is merely the gratification of sense.

Secondly, The worth of the soul.

We can answer the question proposed in the text only as we estimate first, the real value

of the world, and secondly the real value of the immortal soul.

But how shall we estimate this? An immortal soul, ever increasing in sin or holiness, and consequently, in happiness or misery! The thought is overwhelming.

To get a glimpse of the truth on this subject, I observe that to lose the soul is,

- 1. To lose, or fail of, eternal happiness.
 - (1.) Eternal happiness is an ever-growing quantity. However small the beginning, and however gradual the development and the increase, -- still there is no end to the development of the soul, and to the increase of happiness if the soul is holy.
 - (2.) Consequently, each soul must arrive, in the progress of its existence, at a point where he can truly say, taking the whole of his past existence, that he has enjoyed more happiness than all the creatures of God, comprising the whole universe of created beings, had enjoyed previous to his existence. The last one that arrives in heaven from this world, will surely arrive at a point in the progress of his existence, in which he can truly say that he has enjoyed more of heaven -- that the amount of his enjoyment in the aggregate far exceeds all that had been enjoyed by all its inhabitants before he arrived there.
 - (3.) It is true that each soul will be able to say, in the progress of his existence, that he has enjoyed millions of times more happiness than all creatures had enjoyed before he began to be.

The aggregate of their enjoyment together did not amount to so much as the aggregate of his single enjoyment since he began to be. And this will be true of the whole of the holy universe; such will be their progress in an ever-growing holiness and happiness.

- (4.) Not only will they be able to say that they have enjoyed millions of times more, but inconceivably more than all creatures had enjoyed before they began to be. That is, each soul will, in the progress of his existence, be able to say, that the amount of his happiness will be inconceivably greater than that enjoyed by all creatures before he began to be.
- (5.) And this is only the beginning. For remember, the soul is immortal; and when it has been increasing in holiness and happiness for millions of ages, for cycles which the arithmetic of angels cannot compute, it has not a moment less to grow in knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

When the amount of this happiness has swelled to be so great as to overwhelm all thought, -- so far as calculating or apprehending this amount is concerned -- this is but the vestibule of enjoyment, the beginning of happiness which shall have no end.

- (6.) But again, I remark, that this is true whether happiness in the future state accumulates

slowly or rapidly. In this respect it makes no real difference.

If the accumulation of knowledge, and holiness, and happiness, be very slow, but a little gain in even a cycle of ages, it would only take longer; but the result must be the same. As the soul is immortal, there is no end to its progress. Yet there is reason to believe that knowledge, holiness, and happiness will increase more rapidly in the future state. But whether this is true or not, all that I have said before of the amount of its real enjoyment, must be true.

- (7.) But it is true, also whatever be the cause of this happiness, -- whether the reward be purely natural, or whether it be governmental; whether the cause be partly physical and partly moral, -- or whatever be the immediate cause, it must be true, that as the quantity is ever-growing there can be no bound ever set to the increasing happiness of the holy soul. It can only fall short of absolute infinity.
- 2. To lose the soul is to exist in endless sin and misery.
 - (1.) It has been said that sin is necessarily connected with misery. Now to lose the soul, in the Bible sense of the phrase is, manifestly, not annihilation. It is to lose all that is valuable to the soul; to fail of the great end of its existence, and to incur all the miseries of an endlessly perverted existence.
 - (2.) As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that each soul must, in the progress of its existence, arrive at a point at which it can truly say that it has suffered more than the entire universe had known of suffering before it began to suffer.

However great the sufferings of the whole universe of creatures may have been, take the aggregate of all the sufferings of hell and earth, and all that creatures have known in any part, and every part, of God's dominions, each soul may arrive at a point where it will be true of it. That the amount of its sufferings, taken as a whole, is greater than the aggregate of all the sufferings that had been endured in the universe before its sufferings commenced. What a dreadful thought! an ever-growing quantity of suffering!
 - (3.) As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that each soul will arrive at a point where it must say that it has suffered millions of times more in its own experience than all creatures had experienced before it began to suffer.
 - (4.) Yes, inconceivably more than all the creatures of God had known, or even conceived of, previous to its beginning to suffer.
 - (5.) But, this is only the beginning. As I said of happiness, so I say of misery, that when the lost soul has suffered millions of ages, cycles which no arithmetic in heaven or earth can compute, this is but the vestibule of its sufferings; it is but the beginning. An eternal ocean of misery rolls its waves ahead; its progress is onward and downward, and onward

and downward forever and ever.

- o (6.) Again, this is true, whether the amount of misery accumulates slowly or rapidly. If the accumulation be very slow, it will only take a longer period; but the misery at last must be the same. If the accumulation be rapid, the misery at last must be the same. The amount of misery endured by the lost soul can only fall short of the absolutely infinite.
- o (7.) Evidently the same is true whatever be the law or cause of this suffering, -- whether the suffering be a natural consequence of sin, or a governmental consequence of sin.

Whether it be caused by fire or any physical cause whatever, or whether these altogether comprise the cause or causes of this misery, it matters not. The fact remains that, whatever is the cause, whether it be fire or sin, or both, whether it be a natural or governmental consequence, or both -- the fact remains, the soul's enduring an ever increasing amount of misery.

An old writer has attempted to illustrate, what in fact cannot be adequately illustrated from its very nature, by the following supposition.

Suppose a bird were commissioned to remove this globe of earth by the slow process of taking a single grain of sand, and carrying it to such a distance that it would take a thousand years for the bird to go and return. She takes a single grain of sand, and goes her long journey of five hundred years out, and deposits it; and then she spends five hundred years more in her return; making in all a thousand years consumed in conveying away but a single grain and returning for another.

Now suppose she was obliged to remove the entire globe of earth in this way, what an amazing period it would take! It seems to swallow up all thought and conception.

But I add to this supposition -- suppose the old bird were commissioned to remove the entire universe in this way -- myriads of systems that are now known to exist in the material universe, for it is now known that this world is but a mere speck in the material creation. Now suppose that this old bird were to continue her labor until she had removed the entire physical universe, at the rate of one grain of sand for a thousand years. And now let me add to this, that suppose there were hundreds of thousands of such universes as this, and her commission extended to removing them all; -- this would not be eternity. It would be only time, and not eternity. When the whole of this universe should be removed at this rate, there would be not one moment less than at first. And suppose a sinful soul had suffered all this time -- all the time that the bird was coming and going, removing a grain of sand once in a thousand years; -- first, this globe -- and then the other planets -- and then the vast sun, and then the myriads of systems which compose the universe, with all their innumerable planets and suns -- and suppose that of

such universes there were more in number than the angels could compute, and she continued to remove them all, -- when that bird had continued her labors until she has removed this vast and inconceivable amount of matter at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, this vast period cannot for one moment be compared to eternity. The suffering soul has only begun to suffer. To be sure the amount which it has already suffered is inconceivably great.

Yet this is but the vestibule of its sufferings; the beginning of that which has no end. It is an ever-increasing quantity. How the soul shudders at this, and faints, and withers!

Yet such is the destiny of the immortal soul.

LECTURE XI.

July 3, 1861

PROFIT AND LOSS; OR THE WORTH OF THE SOUL--No. 2

Text.--Mark 8:36: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Text.--Luke 9:25: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"

III. Answer of the question, What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?

- The answer itself is, nothing.
- The question itself is an emphatic negative.
- This is a common form of expressing the strongest denial.

IV. But how much would he lose, if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul?

I answer --

1. The two things cannot be compared. We have already seen that the loss of the soul is the loss of endless happiness, and that it incurs endless misery.

Whatever is endless is boundless in that direction; and whatever is bounded can never be compared with that which is boundless. In this case the law of contrast, and not that of comparison, applies. The loss and the gain can be contrasted, but never compared.

It is true that the loss of the soul is not an infinite evil, in an absolute sense. Neither the happiness nor the misery of finite creatures, can ever become in amount absolutely infinite.

Yet as the quantity is ever growing -- although at every period of the future it will fall short of being absolutely infinite -- still, as it has no bounds, it is to all purposes of comparison, infinite; because it is an ever growing quantity, having no bounds beyond which it does not pass.

The worth of the world is a finite quantity, and can therefore be easily measured and estimated. But the worth of the soul is an ever-growing, and in this sense a boundless, or infinite quantity, and can, therefore, never be estimated. The world is estimable; the soul is literally inestimable. No arithmetic can compute it; no finite mind grasp it. Indeed, God Himself must see that that which is an ever-growing quantity can never be compared with that the amount of which can be estimated, and expressed in numbers. The value of the world, then, is as nothing against infinity.

- 2. To gain the whole world would be to gain, after all, but little. And in fact, for a human being to possess the world, would be to him really no good at all; it would only load him with an ocean of cares, and anxieties, and perplexities, from which he could reap really no solid benefit. It would prove to him only what it did to Solomon; and Solomon, be it remembered, possessed as much of it as he knew what to do with. Like Solomon, he would find it vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit.

It would really be worse for a man, as far as his own happiness was concerned, than the most abject poverty.

But the loss of the soul is really a boundless evil. It is as immeasurable as infinity. No finite mind can grasp it; the contemplation of it is overwhelming. No contemplation can reach the amount of loss that would be incurred by losing the soul; nor could it in the least approach it.

You cannot, by calculation, approach a limit, where there is none. This is so simple a statement that even a child can understand it. Let any schoolboy in this assembly attempt to exhaust the number five, by dividing it by three, and he will find that he may divide it by three forever without exhausting it, or in the least degree approaching a termination. This is a curious, but a well-known fact. Even in so simple a case as this, you cannot exhaust five by dividing it by three, should you continue the process to all eternity.

I make this remark for the sake of illustration. To lose the soul is to incur an ever-growing quantity of misery, and to lose an ever-growing quantity of happiness.

Neither of these, happiness or misery, can have any bound in the case supposed. There is no line in that direction. In degree there is limit, both in the case of happiness and misery; but in duration, there is no limit in either case. Therefore comparison is out of the question. All that can be said is, the gain is really nothing in case you gain the world. The

more a man has of the world beyond a certain amount, the worse it is for him. It becomes to him a real trouble and a burden; and beyond a certain amount, he can neither enjoy nor dispose of it.

Possessing too much of the world, is like a man's eating too much for his dinner. A certain amount is useful to him; but let him go beyond that, and all that he eats is an injury to him, and he may easily proceed to surfeiting and death in that direction.

That man is as really mad, who attempts to get more of the world than is good for him, as that man is who eats enormously, and much more than he can digest, for the sake of gratifying his appetite.

Mr. Law has said, that a man is as poorly employed in attempting to lay up a hundred thousand pounds sterling, as he would be in providing for himself a hundred thousand pairs of boots and shoes.

Let it be understood, then, that whenever a man possesses more of the world than he can usefully use and appropriate for the good of mankind and for the glory of God, he is contributing to his own misery, and not to his own happiness. He is loading himself down with cares and anxieties, that will crush and ruin him.

V. Let us, for a moment, reverse the question in the text. What will it profit to lose the world and save your soul?

- 1. Suppose you do not gain this world's goods; suppose you barely possess the necessaries of life; nay, suppose you live in the most abject poverty for the few days you have to remain in this world, and save your soul.

In a few days you will rest from all your poverty, and enter upon the possession of eternal riches, and heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, surrounded with all the wealth, and glories, and blessedness of heaven, and that to all eternity.

- 2. How much, then, do you gain, over and above the loss sustained by not having the world?

The answer is plainly that there is no comparison in the case. Only it may be said, that you have gained infinite riches, and have really lost nothing that was of any importance. You have all the necessaries of life; and if at any time you were straitened in circumstances and had not food enough to eat, this very poverty was made useful to you, and was upon the whole a benefit rather than a loss.

- 3. Talk of material wealth! Why you gain more thus, if you lose the world and save your soul, than the whole material universe is worth -- really, infinitely more. The loss is as nothing; the gain, infinite.

REMARKS.

1. You have only to neglect your soul, and its loss is inevitable. The apostle asks, "How shall we

escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

This question also is an emphatic one, as if the Apostle had said, It is impossible to escape if we neglect so great salvation.

The fact is, the soul of every unconverted sinner is in a lost state. Without faith in Christ, it is condemned already, under the law, and exposed to eternal destruction. A man need not go about to commit this, and that, and the other heinous sin. He is already a sinner; he is condemned, awaiting his execution; and he has only to remain in this impenitent, unbelieving state, and the loss of his soul is as certain as his existence. Sinner, now remember that if you neglect your soul, and neglect the gospel, your damnation is as certain and as inevitable as if you had already been in hell for a thousand years.

Do not forget this; for a great many persons talk as if -- why, they do not do anything very bad. They do not know, they say, if they should die in their present state, whether God could justly send them to hell. They seem to think it a doubtful question whether they should lose their souls, if they should die in their present situation. Now this is an awful infatuation.

The soul is already in a lost condition, already condemned, already under sentence of eternal death. Sinner, you need only to die instantly, to wake up in hell. Hence you are expected to escape, to lay hold of eternal life, to give all diligence to repent and believe the gospel, and what you do, to do quickly. How, then, can you escape, if you neglect to attend, and that effectually, to the salvation of your soul!

2. It is wise for every sinner to inquire, What are my prospects? Am I likely to be saved; or much more likely to be lost? How is it with me thus far? Have I done anything effectually for the salvation of my soul? Or have I been trying to gain the world while I have neglected my soul? Business men inquire into their business prospects. They calculate the chances for and against them; they look the matter over, examine their books, look into their business relations, and look at their debts and credits, and see how their matters stand.

Now, Sinner, have you ever done this in regard to your soul? You look over your matters in a worldly point of view, to see how much you are gaining or losing; but have you ever looked over your spiritual concerns, to see what they are? Have you cared for your soul? or are you only caring for your body? Are you laying up treasures for eternity or only for time?

3. The folly of neglecting the soul is infinite. I know of no other word than infinite that can express it. There can be no limit to the absolute madness of neglecting the soul.

To save the soul is the great errand of life, the infinitely important concern, the one thing needful, the great business and errand upon which God has sent us into this world. If we attend to the soul, eternity is secure; if we neglect the soul, eternity is lost. And to think of a soul's being ushered into this life, and commanded to prepare for an eternal state; and then to neglect it, to die in sin, and be obliged at last to say, "I have been an infinite fool, I have lost my soul!"

4. It is time to take a stand against the spirit of delay in this matter.

We sometimes see men, in worldly matters, act as if they were in a kind of infatuation. There is some important matter to which they ought to attend; but somehow or other the spirit of delay takes possession of them, and they keep putting it off, and putting it off. Some persons seem to have this infirmity in regard to almost everything of a worldly nature.

They delay, and delay; and delay becomes with them a habit, so that you can really depend on them for nothing. This habit of delay in worldly matters, is sure to bring ruin in its train. No person will ever prosper in worldly matters who contracts this habit of delay in worldly business. Persons are peculiarly in danger of contracting this habit in respect to things which are not congenial to their feelings, things to which they dread to attend.

Now in regard to spiritual things -- the carnal mind being enmity against God, spiritual religion is repulsive to the feelings of the unconverted soul. The mind is set upon worldly gratifications, and to deny these and enter into sympathy with Christ, is that to which the sinner has no heart. Hence the infinite danger of contracting the habit of delay.

Indeed, this is the great sin that ruins the millions -- it is simply this habit of delay.

When very young, they think there is time enough, of course; and as they grow older, they contract the habit of delay more and more firmly, flattering themselves that there is time enough. They always expect, at some future time to attend to their souls. They do not mean always to neglect it; but as it is not congenial to their feelings, they put it off for the present.

Now for this there is no remedy, but for men to set reason to work, as we say, and take a decided stand against the spirit of delay. I say, this spirit of delay; for it seems as if there was a spirit in it, an evil spirit. It is a strange infatuation, a moral insanity that seems to take possession of the soul.

There seems to be no end to this delay, delay, delay.

You talk with a Sabbath School child, and he will put it off; you talk with him when he is a young man, and he will still delay. You talk with him in middle age, and exhort him in an earnest manner -- there is still time enough. Talk with him in the decline of life, and his habit of delay has become so strong, that he will finally put it off till his death-bed. And when he can put it off no longer for years, he will adjourn the question from day to day, and then from hour to hour, till at last he will sink down to hell under this horrible infatuation of delay.

5. Every man should act in regard to the salvation of his soul, as prudent men do in worldly matters.

Prudent business men do not allow things to be put off where they run a great risk.

Should one of you learn tonight that your whole estate was liable to be lost through some fraud or some defect in your title, and should you understand that if now attended to thoroughly, all might be secure, but that every hour's delay exposed you to the loss of all you have, would you sleep till you had made all secure, if possible? If you would, you are not a prudent man.

Would you allow things to run on in this loose way from day to day? No, indeed! you would not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you had satisfied yourself that all was secure. Now this is prudence in worldly matters. Great interests are at stake; and it is remarkable that a man should be prudent, and wise, and energetic in attending to such matters in such circumstances.

But what is the reason that you are not acting thus in regard to your spiritual concerns? Are you neglecting your soul? Then you know that this is infinite imprudence.

If you should lose your worldly estate, you might, by industry, and economy, and greater prudence, recover yourself; and obtain at least a competency for this life. The loss might not be irreparable; it might not plunge you into endless poverty. But remember that if you lose your soul, the loss is eternal; it is irreparable; there is no remedy for it; there is no recovering yourself; you have lost all that is valuable, and that to all eternity; you have incurred all that is dreadful and horrible, and that to all eternity.

6. What change would a realizing belief in this fundamental truth necessarily secure!

While men profess to believe in the truths of religion, in the worth of the soul, they in fact do not believe it. That is, they do not believe it in such a sense that they realize its truth. They admit it; but they do not truly believe it. It is by them in a certain sense admitted -- in a misty, unrealizing sense; but as soon as this truth is believed in the sense of its becoming to the mind a fact, a reality, it arouses all the energies of the soul. Just think how differently men would conduct themselves, did they believe that every moment's delay exposes them to the loss of the soul.

How serious, how earnest, how devout, how feeling, how tender, how truthful, how honest, would men become! Indeed, it would greatly change all the business operations of the world; and human society would become another affair. Instead of the vast scramble after the world, the lusting after earthly pleasures, the incessant cry for more, and more, and more of earthly good, the world would lose its hold upon mankind in a great measure.

The whole world would take on a type of behavior, of spirit, and life, so fundamentally different from what we now see, that we should hardly recognize this as the same world. Even the Church, did she but steadily realize this great truth, would become so changed as hardly to be known as the same people.

7. But it is maintained by some, that the souls of the wicked will be annihilated at death; or if not at death, that still they will not be immortal, and will not suffer forever. Now suppose this to be true -- which surely, if reason or Revelation are to be trusted, it cannot be -- but suppose that it is true, what then would a man gain if he should gain the whole world, and be annihilated?

Suppose he did not incur eternal death -- as in this case he would not -- still he would lose eternal happiness, eternal glory, eternal holiness and communion with God. He would lose, at least, an infinite amount of good -- and what would he gain? Nothing, of any real value to him.

There would be, in this case, no computing the loss, no possibility of any finite conception of it.

He has lost his existence; it is blotted out; he has no more life, no more consciousness, no more good. Instead of an eternal existence of ever-growing enjoyment, he is cut short; and, like the beast that perisheth, he is lost in annihilation.

8. But let me ask one more question. What are the chances, either in your favor or against you, in this case? How old are you? How many years have you lived in sin? How much privilege, and how much light have you enjoyed? How many times have you resisted your conscience, and the strivings of the Holy Spirit?

How many prayers have been offered for you? and how much has God done that you have resisted and condemned?

Are you aware how great a proportion of mankind that are ever converted, are converted when they are young? Are you not, many of you, at least, past the age that leaves you much room for a rational expectation that you will ever be converted? Have you not already hardened your heart, resisted the Spirit, and gone so far in sin as that the habit of delay has become so fixed, that you stand but a very slight chance of ever being converted?

Now, so far as we see the grace of God taking effect among men, by far the majority of men live and die in sin. Again, of those that are converted, by far the majority of them are converted under twenty years of age. Comparatively few are converted that live on in sin to be forty years of age; and only now and then one in old age is converted. How many chances, then, to one, do you think some of you stand of losing your soul?

Can you rationally expect to be saved any farther than as a mere peradventure, a possibility that you may be? You know that if you make sure of the present moment, you may be saved. But hitherto you have put it off; and are you not likely to put it off?

Some of you may have quenched the Spirit already, may have extinguished His light; you may already be reprobate because the Lord has rejected you for your spirit of delay. But suppose you are not already given up of God, is there much reason to believe you will ever effectually attend to your salvation?

When will you do so?

9. Are not worldly men mad? They call Christians crazy; they say that we are insane. But they know better. They know that if any men have any claim to rationality, it is those who seriously attend to the salvation of their souls.

But I ask the question, are not worldly men insane? Should they treat their worldly interests as they do their spiritual interests, would not any court in Christendom, upon proof, pronounce them insane?

Yes, indeed. Go in to any court, having jurisdiction in the case, and prove that any man treats his

worldly interests as sinners treat their spiritual and eternal interests, and the court would pronounce them insane, and grant them a commission of lunacy to prevent them from ruining themselves in a worldly point of view. O that a commission of lunacy could be sued out in the high Court of Chancery above, and men compelled to attend to the salvation of their souls! But this is a question that can never be taken out of their hands. In worldly matters, the earthly courts can take the possessions of a mad man and dispose of them in such a way that he cannot squander them. But in spiritual things, the madness is moral; it is culpable; it is the madness of a moral agent. God will not issue a commission of lunacy to compel him to attend to the salvation of his soul. He will warn him, and urge him, and strive with him; but after all He must leave him free to act for himself, and take the consequences.

O Sinner! take care what you do! and let this question in the text ring in your ears, and murmur in your deepest soul -- "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

And this other question -- "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Sinners Not Willing To Be Christians- No.'s 1 & 2

Lectures XII & XIII

July 17, 1861

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--John 5:40: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

LECTURE XII.

In speaking from these words, I remark,

1. That sinners think themselves willing to become Christians. I know I thought so myself at one time before I was converted; and this is a very common mistake with impenitent men.
2. Many professors of religion admit and assume the willingness of sinners to become Christians; and hence they can hardly blame them for not being Christians.
3. Because professors of religion think that sinners are willing to come to Christ but cannot; they therefore maintain the natural, proper inability of the sinner to come to Christ, in other words, to be a Christian. Many professors of religion talk to sinners, and pray for them as if they thought them all right so far as their willing is concerned. They represent them as being perfectly willing to be

Christians, but as being unable.

4. This text affirms an opposite doctrine, and teaches that sinners are unwilling to come to Christ.

The text was addressed to the Jews to whom Christ was speaking, but is no doubt designed to affirm a universal truth of impenitent sinners. To come to Christ is to become a Christian, and this text plainly teaches that sinners are not willing to be Christians.

But to make this plain, I will inquire,

I. What is this life of which Christ speaks?

II. What is implied in coming to Christ for life?

III. Sinners will not come.

IV. Why you will not come.

V. Wherein lies your mistake?

I. What is this life of which Christ speaks?

There are two senses in which we have life in Christ.

- 1. In the sense of exemption from the death penalty, under which men are by reason of sin. In other words, we are indebted to Christ for pardon, and for an escape from eternal death.
- 2. Sinners are indebted to Christ for that spiritual and eternal life which God has given us in Christ.

Rom. 6:23 -- "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

1 John 5:11-12 -- "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son of God hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

These, and many other texts, speak of the eternal life which we have in Christ Jesus. This spiritual life consists substantially in a moral union and fellowship with God's will and with God's feelings -- with God's whole state of mind.

When a sinner turns to Christ, he thereby, and in the very act of turning to him, comes into sympathy with his will and with his state of mind. This is the beginning of eternal life; it is the beginning of moral union and fellowship with God; as John says, "Surely, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Let no one think that the eternal life which we have in Christ Jesus is a mere continuance of existence; for existence without moral sympathy with God would be to me a curse, and not a blessing. Eternal life implies continued existence, but consists in that state of mind in which God is.

II. To bring out clearly the truth affirmed in the text, I must enquire what is implied in coming to Christ for life?

- 1. Coming to Christ does not imply a change of place. It is not a going any whither; but it is a change of mind.
- 2. Coming to Christ is not a change of mind in the sense of a change of opinion; not in the sense of a mere change of intellectual views, nor in the sense of a mere change of feelings. These are all involuntary changes. Change of views, change of opinion, and change of feelings, are involuntary states of mind, and do not constitute any change of moral character; nor do they necessarily imply it. Nor does a change of views, opinions, or feelings, imply any coming, or properly any mental act of which we are the authors. Coming to Christ is a thing required of us; it is a thing also to which we are invited. Coming to Christ, then is something for us to do; it involves our moral activity, and must consist in a moral act.
- 3. But it must consist in a mental act, an act of the mind, and not a bodily or outward act. Mental action is not motive, like an outward act.

It is nevertheless an act, and an act which will produce changes in the acts of the body. But coming to Christ is a mental act, or an act of the mind as distinct from an act of the body.

- 4. Again, coming to Christ is an intelligent act of the mind; that is, the mind acts for reasons. It knows why and wherefore it acts, and therefore acts intelligently.
- 5. Coming to Christ is a voluntary act; that is, it is an act of the will. Coming to any person in the sense of a mere outward coming, always implies an inward coming, an act of will. But the coming to Christ does not necessarily imply any change of place at all, but is simply an act of the will.
- 6. Coming to Christ is a mental act, like coming to any one else for a favor. If I come to one of you for some favor, the coming in this case may imply a change of place in me. I may come from my place where I stand to the place where you sit. But observe, this outward coming implies an inward act of the will that has set my body in motion. The moral act is the inward willing. My mind decides upon it; I choose. I have a reason for coming in view of which I make up my mind, and put forth the act of will which constitutes the inward coming.
- 7. Coming to Christ for this life implies an intelligent closing of the will with Christ's offer; a taking him at his word, a committing of ourselves to him for this end, that is, for this life spoken of in the text.

- 8. Coming to Christ for life in the double sense of which I have spoken, must involve,
 - (1.) A cordial consent to the justice of the death-penalty. If we do not recognize the fact that we deserve the death-penalty, how should we come to Christ for pardon? "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

If a sinner does not recognize himself as condemned and under sentence of death, of course he is not willing to come to Christ for exemption from the execution of this death-penalty.

- (2.) Again. If he admits that he is under sentence of eternal death, but does not consent to the justice of the penalty, he cannot cordially come to Christ for exemption from execution; for while he contends against the justice of the sentence, he is making an issue with justice, instead of cordially accepting mercy. It is a contradiction to say that he is willing to be indebted to Christ for a pardon, while he rebels against the justice of his sentence.

Coming, then, for pardon, or exemption from the execution of the death-penalty, implies a consent to the justice of God in passing the sentence of eternal death upon him.

- (3.) It implies the acceptance of the sentence of death under which the sinner is. Let no one think, therefore, that he is willing to come to Christ for a pardon, while he does not heartily accept the justice of his sentence. But this is a common mistake. Sinners think that they are willing to be Christians, while they resolutely deny their desert of endless death.

Let me illustrate this point. Suppose a man should receive a letter from the executive department of the state; and upon opening it should find that it contained the pardon for a crime of which he never has been guilty.

Could he cordially receive this pardon? No. He would say, either that it was some mistake; or else, that he was grossly insulted.

But again: suppose he had committed a crime for which he deserved punishment in the state-prison for three years; and suppose the pardon should purport to be a pardon for the crime of murder, and thus exempt him from the death-penalty, could he cordially accept this? No. He would say as before, either that this was a mistake; or else, that he was grossly insulted. But again, suppose that the pardon should profess to pardon him for a crime for which he was sentenced twenty years to the state-prison,--could he cordially consent to this? Would not this imply that he had committed a greater crime than he had? Would not this also imply that greater favor and grace was shown him than he really needed? Could he regard it as a fair and generous transaction, and worthy of a government?

Would he not, after all, consider himself as injured by the implication that he had committed a greater crime than he had? To be sure he would. A condition of his cordially accepting it must be, that it shall cover no more time than that for which he deserved to be punished.

- (4.) Now Christ is presented to us as offering us eternal life as a mere gift, no part of which is due to us in justice. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life." The very fact that the whole of the eternal life is a gift, implies that the forfeiture incurred by sin is eternal death.
- 9. Coming to Christ implies the coming to him for pardon and the expecting of pardon from him. That is, it is looking to him for pardon with the expectation -- the applying to him for it, in the expectation that he will grant it.
- 10. Coming to Christ for spiritual and eternal life must involve,
 - (1.) Repentance, or the renunciation of sin. Observe, this spiritual life consists in moral union with God's state of mind, fellowship with God. Of course the very act of coming for this life involves the renunciation of sin.
 - (2.) Implies and involves the yielding of the will and of the whole being to him and to his will.
 - (3.) Coming to him for spiritual life is the voluntary yielding up of the mind to the divine attraction,--to the teachings, and drawings, and persuasions of his loving spirit.

It is a cordial trusting in him,--a cordial submission of the will to his will,--a cordial embracing of his promises and offers of mercy. The act is an act of will.

True, such is the will's relation to the feelings, that the act of will draws with it the feelings into sympathy with God's feelings; yet the responsible act of coming is a responsible, free choice or act of the will--an intelligent decision, yielding, committal of the whole mind to Christ in the relations in which the gospel presents him.

This cordial yielding of the will influences the sensibility, and brings the whole mind into fellowship with God.

III. Sinners will not come.

- 1. By sinners of course I mean impenitent sinners--sinners who do not come--who are not in fact Christians.
- 2. We have just seen that willing is coming--that to come is to will, or be willing. Willing, in the

sense in which I have explained it, is the very act of coming.

- 3. Therefore there can be no other reason why a sinner does not come than that he will not. If he is willing, he has come already. If he wills as he ought to will, there is no power in the universe that can prevent his coming, for in fact he does come.
- 4. If he were willing and could not, he would not be to blame for not coming. Whatever one cannot do by willing, he cannot do at all. And if he were truly willing to come, and was really unable, it would be impossible to blame him for not coming. And in fact, while the sinner thinks himself willing to come, he cannot blame himself for not coming. He may regret his inability in a certain sense; but he cannot recognize his desert of damnation for not coming, while he regards himself as willing to come but unable.
- 5. But if you could not come in the sense of a proper inability, you would not be commanded to come. Do you believe that an infinitely good God would command you, on pain of eternal death, to come, if you could not?

I have asked this question to hundred's of sinners, I think I may safely say, when they have plead their inability and professed their willingness to come. I have asked them--"Do you believe that God would command you on pain of eternal death, to come to Christ, if he believed that you could not come? In other words, do you believe that God would command you to perform an impossibility, on pain of eternal death?" I do not recollect ever to have found a person who would affirm, that he believed that God would command him to do what he knew he was unable to do.

But again, if you could not come, you would not be invited to come. Do you believe that God would invite you seriously to come to him when he knew that you could not come? If he knew that you were well-disposed enough, and really were willing to come but could not,--do you believe that he would invite you to come?

- 6. But perhaps you will say, Is it not taught in John 6:46, that no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him?

I answer, Yes, but what is this drawing? Christ immediately adds, "They shall all be taught of God;" which he quotes from the Old Testament. Here then we learn that this drawing is teaching.

Now remember that this text in the sixth chapter of John, does not contradict the text upon which I am preaching. Christ does not contradict himself when he says, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" and when he says, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." He means to affirm in the text upon which I am speaking, that sinners are unwilling to come to him; and in John, 6:44, he means to teach that no man can be willing until he is informed about Christ. It is expressly affirmed that this drawing is teaching--"They shall all be taught of God." This drawing, then, is not a physical, but a moral drawing,--a teaching; a persuasion.

This text, then, does not teach any natural inability of a sinner to come to Christ who is taught by the Lord who Christ is, and what Christ's relations to men are. This drawing is only intended to secure our cordial consent, that is, our cordial willing, or coming to Christ. Observe, this text which you bring forward as teaching that you are unable to come, implies that you are unwilling to come. The drawing is designed to influence the will. If you were willing, as you suppose, you would not need the drawing.

- 7. But as coming is an act of the will, it cannot be impossible to one whose will is free, and who is instructed by the word and Spirit of God in regard to who Christ is.

Freedom of will consists in proper ability to will either way in every case of moral obligation or duty. The will is not free in the sense that it can act where there is no motive whatever for action, or no object of choice presented. A heathen who has never heard of Christ, is not free to come to Christ, because he knows nothing of him.

But one who is instructed, and who has been drawn in the sense of having been taught who and what Christ is, must be free to come; that is, he must have natural power to come; and his not coming is simply an unwillingness--an unwillingness for which he is entirely responsible--an unwillingness which he is under infinite obligation to overcome. If he knows who and what Christ is, and what Christ's requirements and offers are, he must be able to come; and hence the great guilt of his unwillingness.

- 8. If you do not come, it is a plain fact that you will not; therefore you are deceived in supposing yourself to be willing to come.

IV. Why you will not come.

- 1. Because of what is implied or involved in coming. For example: you are too proud, and blind, and self-righteous, to accept the justice of the sentence which has been passed upon you. You may say, perhaps, that it is just; but you are not cordial in accepting the propriety and equity of the sentence which God has passed upon you; consequently you are not willing to come to Christ for pardon.
- 2. You do not cordially embrace the atonement. Christ's death has been substituted for yours; but being unwilling to accept with cordiality the justice of the sentence against yourself, you are unwilling cordially to embrace the atonement of Christ as offered for you. You do not cordially recognize its fitness, and propriety, and necessity. Virtually denying your own desert of death, you do not cordially accept the substitute that has been offered. You will not embrace, and make the atonement offered by Christ your own offering, as needed to honor and sustain the government of God in the forgiveness of your sins. You do not realize yourself to be a sinner deserving so great a curse and so dire a damnation as that such an atonement is a needed expression of God's abhorrence of your sins.
- 3. Another reason why you are not willing to come to Christ is, you are unwilling to give up a life of sin, and now to enter upon a life of holiness. But this, as we have seen, is implied in coming to Christ. Truly coming to Christ for pardon, implies repentance, or the giving up of sin.

Truly coming to Christ for the eternal life here spoken of, implies the giving up of sin and entering into sympathy with God's holiness. This you are unwilling to do. Indeed, as we have seen, to will this is to do it.

- 4. You will not come to Christ, for the same reason that a drunken, debased wretch would not come into sympathy with a holy family, though he had the offer of adoption by that family, and of being made a joint heir with the children of the family. If such a debased wretch had the offer of adoption, and of heirship, you can understand why he would not come into sympathy with their state of mind, and become holy like them. Now this is the same reason why you are unwilling to come to Christ for this life.

To come to Christ for this life is to become like Christ,--is to come into sympathy with Christ,--is to yield yourself to obey Christ. But all this you are unwilling to do. The very fact that you do not do it, shows that you are unwilling; for to be really and truly willing were to do it.

The difficulty, then, is solely in your unwillingness; and you are unwilling as I have said, because of what is implied or involved in coming to Christ.

LECTURE XIII.

July 31, 1861

SINNERS NOT WILLING TO BE CHRISTIANS--No. 2

Text.--John 5:40: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

V. Wherein lies your mistake?

- 1. You mistake wish for will. A drunkard might wish that he was a sober man, and that he was rid of his habit of intemperance; the most debased sinner in the world might wish that he was a better man; the vilest harlot might wish that she was a chaste woman. But in these cases wishing is not willing. While the drunkard wishes that he was a sober man, still he is not willing; and does not make up his mind forever to renounce drinking. He wishes he were a sober man, but he is not willing, and does not at once will to forsake his cups. He does not rule the appetite down, and make up his mind to drink no more.

Now this is precisely so with you. When you consider the error of your ways, your guilt and your danger, you wish that you were a Christian, but this is not being a Christian. You do not resign your will to Christ; you do not come to him; you do not at once settle it, now and forever, that obedience is to be the rule of your life forever--that trust, and confidence, and love shall be your state of mind forever.

- 2. You mistake a desire to be safe and happy for a willingness to come to Christ.

When sinners realize their guilt and danger, I know that they are very willing to be safe.

They desire and are even willing to be safe and happy--indeed, they are greatly anxious to be safe and happy. But this is not the same thing as to will obedience to Christ. It is not the same thing as to trust in Christ; it is not by any means the same thing as to enter into sympathy with him, and to receive him in all the relations that he sustains to the soul.

- 3. You mistake a willingness to do other things for a willingness to come to Christ. You are willing perhaps, to perform external duties; you may be willing to pray, in your way, to read your Bible, and to use the means of grace, as you express it; but this is not the same thing as to be willing to take Christ's yoke upon you; willing to obey him; willing to become his follower; willing to take up your cross and follow him, which is implied in a willingness to come to him.
- 4. You stop short in the means. In immediate connection with the text Christ says to the Jews, "Ye do search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

The English translation needs amending in this case. It reads, "Search the Scriptures," as if it were imperative; whereas it is indicative; "Ye do search the Scriptures." It is not a command to search them; but an assertion that they do search them. They stopped short in the Scriptures. They read the Scriptures a great deal, and they laid great stress on this; but after all they were not willing to do what they might have learned from the Scriptures. And sinners are now making precisely the same mistake in this respect which Christ charged upon the Jews. The Jews were set upon doing certain duties which the law required of them; by doing which duties they expected to be saved. They read the Scriptures, not for the sake of understanding about Christ, that they might come to him, but they read the Scriptures as a duty--they read the Scriptures as a task. They searched the Scriptures, and made a great deal of reading and searching the Scriptures; and they rested in that duty without trusting in him whom the Scriptures taught.

Now there are a great many persons who are willing to pray in their way; but when they have done their duty they stop and wait for God to answer their prayer. They pray that they may come to Christ; but they do not come. They pray that they may repent, and then stop for God to give them repentance. They pray for faith, and then wait for faith to come, instead of at once exercising faith. They pray that they may be willing to come to Christ; but instead of putting forth the act of will, they do not get beyond their prayer. They use the means, and then console themselves that they have done their duty. They go to meeting and hear about Jesus; but they do not come to him. In short, they are self-righteously using and stopping short in the means. These means were designed to lead them quite to Christ; but instead of seeing in these means how to come to Christ, and instead of coming to him, they pray, and read the Bible, and attend meeting, and there they stop, content with that.

Now are you not making precisely this mistake. You go to meeting--many of you profess to pray--you think you are anxious to be Christians--many of you profess, probably, to be willing to be Christians; and yet you do not put forth the act of will that would constitute you a Christian.

You do not trust; you do not submit; you do not embrace his will, or his atonement; you do not accept him in the relations in which he presents himself to you. Do not then, deceive yourselves, and suppose yourselves to be willing while your own unwillingness is your only difficulty.

REMARKS.

1. From what has been said you can see why you need, and the sense in which you need, the Holy Spirit to make you Christians. You do not need the Holy Spirit in the sense that you are unable, but because you are unwilling to come to Christ.

You need his agency to make you Christians for the same reason that a drunkard might need the most powerful persuasive influences to be brought to bear upon him to make him a temperance man. Strictly speaking, his will being free, he is able to resist all temptation; and he does not need this powerful persuasion to make him able to will to give up his cups, but to secure him in temperance--to secure the consent of his will in fact.

He may need some powerful persuasive influences to be brought to bear upon him to really secure the consent of his will.

He needs to have his unwillingness overcome, which can only be done by persuasion; and in order to save him he may need to have a great moral influence brought to bear upon him to make him willing. It is not a physical influence that the drunkard needs, but a moral influence.

His will is not moved by an influence like a steel spring, by a physical force acting directly upon it; but it is moved by argument and persuasion, and by reasons addressed to his reason, his conscience, and his feelings. He is able to resist temptation in such a sense as that the temptation is no excuse for his sin. But still, such is the committal of his will to the gratification of his appetite, that as a matter of fact he will not give up his cups without this powerful moral influence brought to bear upon him.

Now just so it is with you, sinner, in respect to becoming a Christian. You need the Holy Spirit, not to make you able to come to Christ, but to make you willing.

2. We see also the nature of his agency--that his influence is not exerted physically upon the will; but it is a persuasive influence; it is by teaching, convincing, reproving, drawing; it is by a divine showing, an inward enlightening, that he makes the sinner willing.

3. You are not to wait to be converted before you come; but to come at once. To be converted is to be made willing to come. Or more strictly, to be converted is to be drawn to Christ, to turn to Christ. Now suppose you were trying to persuade your son to do something which you desired of him, and were presenting to him the reasons, and urging, and entreating, and using all moral means to secure a willingness in him; and suppose you should find that he was waiting for you to make him willing, to convert him to your views and requirements. You are using the appropriate means, and the only appropriate means, to make him willing; but instead of yielding to these means, instead of suffering himself thus immediately to be persuaded, to be influenced, he hardens himself and waits for you to make him willing.

This would be just as you are doing in regard to Christ--you are waiting to be converted, or waiting to be made willing. Perhaps you think that conversion and being willing are very different things; therefore, that you must be converted first--must have some physical change wrought in you to enable you to be willing. Now the truth is, that you are to yield at once to the considerations presented to you, and thus become willing. You are to become willing; to put forth the act of will at once, under the persuasions that press upon you.

4. Persistence in maintaining that you are willing to be Christians, will be fatal to you. While you insist upon it that you are willing, you are never likely to become so; for in fact you are thus, justifying yourself, and throwing the responsibility upon God.

For you might very reasonably ask, if you are willing and yet unable, "Wherefore doth he yet find fault?" But if the difficulty is that of unwillingness, then the responsibility is altogether upon you.

I was once laboring in a revival where the most prominent man in the congregation, in several respects, became greatly disturbed about his soul. But he would maintain that he was willing to be a Christian.

His wife was a Christian woman, and prayed much for him; and he professed a willingness to be a Christian, and insisted upon it that he was unable to become one.

He became very restive, and even angry under the preaching; as my object was from time to time to show him, with all other sinners in the congregation, that they were not willing to be Christians, and that this was their only difficulty.

One night the truth pressed him so hard that he was very angry, and he used some very improper language, even before he left the house of God. But he spent a very uneasy night; and early in the morning he arose and wandered off from his house, away to a grove of wood in the distance. There he knelt down and attempted to pray.

He told me afterwards, that he felt as if he must get alone, where he could pray and use his voice without restraint.

When he had knelt to pray he found his mouth closed and that his heart would not pray. He felt a rebellious spirit within him; and he found himself even unwilling to ask for the grace and mercy of God with any heart in his prayer. Finding no prayer in his heart, it occurred to him that he would repeat the Lord's Prayer.

He began--"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." He said he felt condemned, and as if this were hypocritical in him to call God his Father when he had never treated him as a Father--he had never obeyed him as a Father--he had never honored him as a Father.

And then the petition, "Hallowed be thy name,"--he said he did not care for the sacredness of the name of God. He was a man that was sometimes profane, and had often used the name of God

profanely;--and now that he should say, "Hallowed be thy name!"

And then the next petition, "Thy kingdom come:"--he said he could hardly say it. He knew that he had no sympathy with the kingdom of God; and that he was not honest and earnest when he asked God that his kingdom might come. He felt an inward reluctance to express such a sentiment as "thy kingdom come."

But at the next petition he found himself brought to a stand:--"Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." He said that he could not say it. He found that his will rose up against God's will. What! shall I pray that God's will may be done? Am I willing that it may be done in respect to me? Am I willing to do it myself.

Am I truly willing to do the will of God as they do the will of God in heaven? He said his mouth was shut, He saw at once that the difficulty was his unwillingness.

There he stood on his knees, confounded. Now the appalling fact was out before him, so that he could no longer resist it, that he was unwilling to do or suffer the will of God; hence that he was unwilling to be a Christian; that he always had been unwilling; and there on his knees a suppliant before God, he saw that he was in rebellion against the will of God.

But what should he do? I think he said he sweat with agony. It seemed as if his sins would crush him. He saw where the difficulty lay; the whole difficulty lay in his unwillingness; and a load of guilt was pressing him down to death.

But just here it occurred to him, "why should I not be willing? Why should not God's will be done? Ought not his will to be done? Is not his will perfect? Should not all his creatures submit to his will? Whose will should govern? Is it not right, is it not safe, is it not altogether best that I, and that all beings, should do the will of God?"

Such considerations flashed over his mind; and he said that he gathered up all his soul, and at the top of his voice he cried--"Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

He said that with his words he put forth the whole strength of his will, and yielded all up to the will of God. In a moment a great calm came over him,--he breathed easily and sweetly. He rose from his knees and walked back to his house in peace; and from that moment he was a man of God. So he lived and so he died.

See now! he did not wait to be made willing; but when he saw what the difficulty was, he instantly, as he said, gathered up all his energies and became willing. He gave his consent--he yielded the point. He was not passive in waiting, but active in willing. This is the way to do, sinner--to gather up your energies, and be willing. Consent as you would consent to do anything else; and throw yourself upon his sovereign mercy.

5. But perhaps you will say--"I do not feel enough; and I do not feel right: I must feel right before I can come."

But remember that coming is not a feeling but a consenting.

Does it not appear reasonable that you should consent to all the will of Christ? Does it not appear to you to be reasonable that you should trust him? that you should consent that you deserve to be sent to hell for your sins? Does it not appear to you reasonable that you should give up your sins? that you should turn away from sin, and give all up to Christ? Do you not regard this as reasonable? Then why do you not at once consent to what you know to be reasonable? If you acknowledge it to be reasonable that you ought at once to give all up to Christ, why then do you not consent to what you see to be right and reasonable? Heartily consenting to this, is coming to Christ.

As I said, do not wait passively for anything to be done to you, as if some physical influence were to be brought to bear upon you, like an electric shock, to make you willing.

Yield to the persuasions of his truth and of his Spirit. Yield to your convictions. Yielding to your convictions is coming to Christ.

You are convinced that you ought to come, that you may come, that now is the time to come;--now yield to your convictions. Do not suppose it is possible for you ever to be converted while you do not yield to your convictions; for yielding to your convictions is conversion.

6. There is a great deal of false instruction given on this point to sinners.

I was much astonished to hear the celebrated Mr. Spurgeon, of London, affirm, in preaching, a doctrine the direct opposite of that which this text presents. He insisted upon it that sinners were willing to come to Christ--that this was not their difficulty at all. He said of himself, that he was willing to be a Christian long before he became so.

Now in his teaching there was such an utter want of discrimination as to quite agonize me. I must say, that he spoke as if in experience he had never really known what it was to be willing or unwilling--really to come to Christ. By this I do not mean to express a doubt that he was ever converted. But certainly he had never justly discriminated, he had never analyzed the subject so as to perceive exactly what is implied in coming to Christ. This was quite evident in his instructions. He completely mystified the subject.

Now false instruction upon this point is often fatal to the sinner. While he really thinks himself willing to be a Christian he cannot rationally and truly blame himself for not being a Christian. It is therefore of the greatest importance that on this point right instruction should be given:--that the sinner should be made to understand right where his difficulty lies, and to see that it consists in his pertinacious obstinacy, his utter unwillingness to embrace the will of Christ.

I can hardly suppose that Mr. Spurgeon himself, if questioned upon the subject--and I must say, that I greatly desired to question him--I say, I can hardly suppose that he himself would fail to acknowledge that if the sinner cordially accepted the will of Christ--that this is coming to Christ.

I suppose also that he would admit, if questioned, that if the sinner did not cordially accept the will of Christ--that this is an unwillingness to come to Christ.

Indeed, it is plain that the false instruction so often given upon this point, is owing to a want of discrimination in regard to what is really implied in a willingness to come to Christ.

7. There is a great deal of unintelligent praying for sinners on this subject, and even in their presence. I have often heard persons pray for sinners substantially in this way: They would say to the Lord--"These sinners are seeking thee sorrowing; they are seeking thy love to know." Indeed, in some instances I have heard it plainly expressed in prayer, that these sinners were willing; and the suppliant plainly imagined that the sinner was all right so far as his will was concerned, and would say in prayer that which implied it. Now this must be most offensive to God, and a great stumbling block to the sinner. It is really taking the sinner's part against God. The sinner should be made to know and feel that his only difficulty is stubbornness, hardness of heart; or, which is the same thing, unwillingness to accept the will of Christ, and to receive Christ just as he is presented in the Bible. Any praying for the sinner that does not imply this, is an offence to God and a stumbling block to the sinner.

Such praying in the presence of the sinner begets only pity, and not repentance. The sinner says, "Yes, I am seeking his love to know--I am seeking him sorrowing--I wonder he does not hear me. I am entirely willing to do his will--I am entirely willing to be, and to do, and to suffer everything that he desires."

Now of every impenitent sinner this is all false. And for a Christian, or a Christian minister, to pray, or to say, that so far as his will is concerned he is all right, must be an abomination to God; and if the sinner believes it, it must be a ruin to the sinner.

8. The truth is that sinners are universally stubborn and unbelieving; and it is just this that constitutes them sinners.

The will does not bow; it does not embrace the will of God; it does not accept the atonement, the authority, and the will of Christ.

This is the exact point of controversy between God and every impenitent sinner. He is unwilling that God should govern; he does not cordially consent to receive God as his king, his ruler, or Christ in the relations in which he is presented to him.

9. We should aim to draw the sinner to Christ, that he may come to him for the life here presented. We should try to make the sinner understand exactly what he is to receive from Christ, what he is to come to Christ for, why he is to come to Christ, when he is to come to Christ, and to strip him of every refuge of lies and of all his mistakes and self-righteousness.

Urge him at once to give up his sins, to put away his unbelief, to trust in Christ, and to embrace his whole will.

10. Lastly, all sinners may come. The Bible says, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life

freely." "The Spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

Now do any of you say, ah! may I come? Yes, you may: however great your sins, you may come. Perhaps some of you are thinking--"Well, the time was when I might have come. But oh, I have wandered so far, I have been in sin so long I fear I am a castaway. There is no hope for me. I have done so much to disoblige Christ, and have so often grieved and quenched his Spirit that I greatly fear that now the invitation does not extend to me."

Sinner, remember the language still is, "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"Let him that is athirst come" "Let all the ends of the earth come." This is the unalterable language of the Bible. Do not fail, then, through unbelief.

Do not, now, sin against your own mercies. You may come--you may come now. You may have this life. You may enter into it at once.

And now, will you come? Come, dying sinner, and let it not be said another hour that you will not come. Oh, let it no longer be true of you, that you will not come to Christ that you might have life. Come, dear soul! Come now--consent now. Cast away your objections, your unbelief, and your sins. Come, for all things are now ready. Will you come?

Holding The Truth in Unrighteousness- No.'s 1 & 2

Lectures XIV & XV

August 14, 1861

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Rom. 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

LECTURE XIV.

In speaking from these words I inquire,

I. What is ungodliness?

II. What is unrighteousness in the sense here used?

III. What is it to hold the truth in unrighteousness?

IV. What are we to understand by the wrath of God in this text?

V. Against whom is this wrath of God revealed from heaven?

VI. Why is the wrath of God thus revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?

I. What is ungodliness?

The original word means, primarily, to neglect God. It is the omission of duty to God; the withholding from him of worship, love, confidence, obedience. It is the withholding from God that which is his due.

II. What is unrighteousness in the sense here used?

- 1. The original word properly means, neglect of duty to man, as ungodliness implies neglect of duty to God.
- 2. It is an omission of duty, a withholding from man his due.
- 3. Unrighteousness, as the term is evidently here used in distinction from ungodliness, means the withholding of that equal love to man which is his due--that regard for his interest, and feelings, and character, and whatever is to him a good.

Withholding this from man is unrighteousness, as withholding it from God is ungodliness. Unrighteousness, in the broader sense, consists in withholding either from God or man, whatever is their due from us.

- 4. But as the terms ungodliness and unrighteousness are here both used, we are undoubtedly to understand unrighteousness here as having reference particularly to the omission of duty to our fellow men. Every thing then, is unrighteousness, which is short of doing our whole duty to our fellow men; and every thing is ungodliness which is short of doing our whole duty to God.

III. I inquire in the third place, What is it to hold the truth in unrighteousness?

- 1. The word rendered hold in this case, means to restrain, to hold down, to hold back. To hold the truth in unrighteousness, is, for selfish reasons, to refuse to obey the truth.
- 2. When duty is once known or seen, indifference is impossible. Truth is the natural stimulus of

the mind, and especially truth that reveals moral obligation.

When moral obligation is perceived, the mind cannot remain inactive. The perception of moral obligation forces the mind into a state of activity. The freedom of the Will does not imply, that in such circumstances the mind can remain inactive altogether.

But the freedom of the Will implies, that in every case of perceived moral obligation we have power to act one way or the other, to comply or refuse compliance with moral obligation.

When, therefore, moral obligation is perceived, passivity becomes impossible. The mind must act; it must either comply with the obligation; or it must refuse.

This should always be remembered--that indifference, or a state of non-activity, becomes impossible in the presence of perceived obligation. In such circumstances truth must be embraced or rejected; obligation must be accepted or rejected; duty must be performed or neglected.

To hold the truth in unrighteousness, then, is to withhold the heart, and life from obeying it; it is to persist in neglect of duty when convinced, and when obligation is seen.

- 3. To hold the truth in unrighteousness, is to refuse to perform duty when it is known. Neglect in these circumstances, is real refusal. There cannot be neglect in the sense of no action at all. The mind must act in opposition, must gird itself and refuse, in order to neglect when obligation is seen.

To hold the truth in unrighteousness, then, is precisely this: when obligation to our fellow men is perceived and admitted, to selfishly refuse to meet the obligation.

- 4. To hold the truth in unrighteousness is to unjustly neglect or refuse to perform our duty to God or man. Ungodliness, or withholding from God, is injustice or unrighteousness toward God.

All, then, who neglect to perform their duty either to God or man, are guilty of holding the truth in unrighteousness in the sense of this text.

IV. What are we to understand by the wrath of God in this text?

I reply, not a selfish anger such as selfish men exercise; but a benevolent, holy indignation, such in kind as a benevolent father or ruler might exercise toward injustice, selfishness, and madness in an undutiful child or subject. The term is a strong one, and is rendered wrath, by which we mean something more than mere anger in a low degree; it implies an intense indignation.

V. I inquire, against whom is this wrath of God revealed from heaven?

I answer,

- 1. Against all persons who do not act upon, and up to their conviction in respect to their duty either to God or man. It is a very common thing to find persons admitting that such and such things they ought to do, and there they stop. They seem to make a virtue of admitting their obligation in words, while they deny it in action.

You press them with their obligation, and they will say--"O yes, I know that I ought--but what then?" There they stop and do not lift a finger to perform their duty.

Now against all such persons whether they be professors of religion or non-professors, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.

- 2. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all who allow themselves in short-comings. I say allow themselves in short-coming, in respect, either to God or man. It is not an uncommon thing for persons, in looking back, to accuse themselves of short-comings, when after all they are not aware of having deliberately and knowingly, at the time, fallen short of their duty.

But observe, I say that the wrath of God is revealed against all who allow themselves in short-comings--who are aware of their duty and really indulge themselves in neglect and short-comings; as if a man owed a debt to a neighbor, and knowingly and deliberately neglected to pay him; or when an individual admits his obligation to love, to confide in, to worship and obey God, and indulges himself in disobedience, or allows himself to neglect to perform his duty to God; against all such, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.

- 3. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all who stop short of living up to their privileges, as well as their duty.

It is really a mans duty to live up to his privilege; and a man cannot allow himself to live below his privilege, without at the same time allowing himself to live below his duty. It is certainly a man's duty to avail himself of all the means within his reach of promoting his own holiness and usefulness in the highest degree; and to stop short of this, for selfish reasons, is a great crime against God; and therefore the wrath of God is revealed against all such as do this.

- 4. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all who rest, and stop short of full sanctification, full obedience to God as they understand their duty. I say, rest short; by which I mean that they knowingly quiet themselves in this state of short-coming.

There are a great man professors of religion who seem to have very little anxiety about being entirely sanctified, and fully obeying God. If they can believe themselves safe, they seem very well satisfied; although they know they are indulging in more or less sin from day to day.

It is not with them a matter of intense struggle and effort, to render to God full obedience. It is enough for them that they think themselves justified; the question of sanctification they are very willing to postpone.

They say they do not believe in sanctification in this life. They seem to throw up the reins and live on loosely, talk about continually sinning and repenting; while it is evident enough that they do not care to render to God a full and continued obedience. They care but little for sin if they can be forgiven.

They care but little about sanctification if they can ensure justification. Now it is perfectly plain that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all such persons who are living on in known and allowed short-comings in regard to sanctification--sinning and sinning and caring little about it--being anxious only to know that they are safe.

The fact is, such persons are not safe. You should understand this at once, that you are as far as possible from being safe.

You are under the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against you. You are knowingly and carelessly withholding from God his due; you are allowing yourself in sin, caring more for your justification than for your sanctification.

What is sanctification but full obedience to God? And can you make God believe that you are a sincere Christian, while you are careless about rendering to him, in all things, a full obedience?

- 5. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all whose religion is of the negative rather than of the positive kind.

The law of God is positive. It requires supreme love to God and equal love to man. It requires action toward God and man, intense action, energetic devotion to God and man. Now there are many who seem to suppose that this is the doing nothing bad, as they say.

They run hither and thither, and indulge themselves, and live in most things like the world around them. Their way of spending their time, of spending their money, of using their influence, is such that you enquire, why they do this, and why they do that. "Why!" they reply, "what harm is there in it?"

With them the question is, what harm is there in this or that course of life and not what good will this do? If they live without committing flagrant sin they think they do well. It does not seem so much as to enter into their designs to do all they can for the promotion of God's glory, but only to avoid doing such things as will be an open disgrace to religion. Their religion is a mere negation, if it may be called religion; which, indeed it cannot properly be, for all true religion is love, confidence, worship, obedience. Let all such, then, as are satisfying themselves with this negative form of what they call religion, remember that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them.

Indeed, there are some whose history seems to be one of omission. They are continually neglecting many forms of duty; and they know it. Perhaps some of you here are admitting from day to day that this, and that, and the other thing is your duty; and yet you never

address yourselves seriously to the performance of it.

Some of you are perhaps neglecting secret prayer--are neglecting your Bible--are neglecting to pay your debts--are neglecting in the outward life a great multitude of things, but in regard to God and man, and in your inward state you cannot but know that you are really neglecting to render to God all the love and confidence that are his due, and that you are neglecting to love your neighbor as yourself. Your history is one of omission. You seem to overlook the fact, that omission is the very thing against which this text is arrayed; that this ungodliness and unrighteousness are omissions of duty to God and man.

Again, you seem also to forget that omission is a real withholding, a real refusal; that it is not a state of inaction, but of contrary action--a girding yourself to resist the claims of God and the claims of duty.

Your omission is not a mere passive state, but a state of selfish activity; the omitting to perform your duty to God and man for the sake of gratifying yourself.

Now can you not, some of you, right here, accuse yourself of living a life of omission? Is not this the history of your religion?

Are you not acknowledging from day to day in your conscience that you owe this, and that, and the other duty to God and man; while you are neglecting to perform these duties? Now remember, if this is so, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against you. If you are neglecting any heart duty, or any outward duty--and if you allow yourselves in this neglect or continue to indulge in this omission, you are as far as possible from being safe. I pray you, lay it to heart.

- 6. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners who neglect repentance and faith; in other words, who neglect to become Christians.
 - (1.) The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners who neglect God, who neglect prayer, and who neglect to perform all the duties enjoined upon every son and daughter of Adam.
 - (2.) The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all procrastinators, whether in or out of the church. By procrastinators, I mean, those who have it in their mind at some future time to perform their duty; and who for some reason put it off for the present. This is the great sin of many persons. They know their duty--they know that now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation; but for unrighteous reasons they continue to procrastinate, to put God off.
 - (3.) The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners who neglect to do and be what God requires Christians to do and be. All men to whom the Gospel is preached are bound to be Christians immediately.

A great many sinners are constantly watching Christians and accusing them,

but they seem not to understand that God requires of them what He requires of Christians, and that in condemning Christians they only condemn themselves; in pointing out the short-comings of Christians they only point out their own. Now sinners, what you suppose God requires of Christians, you are bound to perform yourselves. For you seem to know what the Christian's duty is; you continue to judge the Christian, and therefore you show that you know what he ought to do and what he ought to be. But if you neglect to do and to be what you require of him, then you fall short of your known duty, and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against you for not doing what you exact of Christians.

- (4.) The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all who know better than they habitually do. Now all sinners are in this state; and this is what constitutes them sinners. They know better than they do; they know their duty but they do it not. And this is that for which the wrath of God is revealed against them.

Impenitent sinners are very apt to think of their sins only as commissions of something outbreaking in the outward life; but they seldom think much of their neglects of duty either to God or man. But it should be understood that all sin resolves itself into either neglect or refusal to render to God and man their due. Indeed, there are many, both professors and non-professors, who allow themselves to live habitually in opposition to their convictions of duty. Now let it be understood that this is the very essence of sin; and against all such persons the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.

VI. Why is the wrath of God thus revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?

- 1. Neglect of duty implies a knowledge of duty. A man cannot be said to neglect a duty of which he has no knowledge.
- 2. Neglect of duty implies ability to perform it. A man cannot be truly said to neglect that which he has no power to perform.
- 3. Neglect of duty, as I have already said, implies a refusal to do duty. Indeed it involves it. A state of passivity in the presence of perceived obligation being impossible, neglect of duty must involve deliberate and persistent disobedience to God.
- 4. Neglect of known duty to God or man, involves a rejection of God's authority, as not a sufficient reason for action.

It is virtually saying, "What if God does require of me such and such a thing? That is no good reason why I should do it. Who is God that I should obey Him, or what profit should I have if I should pray to Him?"

It involves a most insolent and contemptuous rejection of God's command as being a

sufficient reason for action in that direction.

- 5. Holding the truth in unrighteousness involves a deliberate rejection of moral obligation as constituting an influential reason for action.

Observe, in this case the sinner knows his duty, he admits the obligation in words but rejects it in practice.

Now what is this but saying, "What do I care for moral obligation? To be sure, I admit that there is a moral obligation; but what do I care? Do you suppose I am going to be influenced by moral obligation? If you do, you do not know me. I hope you do not think that I am so weak as to yield to a mere moral obligation--to a mere command of God--to a mere sense of duty. Not I."

- 6. Holding the truth in unrighteousness involves a contempt for the idea of duty as being of no real practical account.

"Duty?" says the sinner--"do you think I care for duty? What! my duty to God, and my duty to my neighbor? Talk not to me of duty. What do I care for duty?"

This holding the truth in unrighteousness is a real contempt for duty. It is virtually saying--"You never need expect me to be influenced by that consideration. You never need to tell me of my duty, for I care not for it. I will pursue my inclination, duty in any wise to the contrary notwithstanding. Why do you come to me whining about the idea of duty, and tell me it is my duty to do thus, and thus, and thus? Away with your cant! I will have nothing to do with duty."

- 7. This holding the truth in unrighteousness, involves a real ruling down of all moral considerations. The consideration of duty to God--the consideration of God's authority--the consideration of God's rights, of man's rights, and of all rights--it is just ruling them down; putting the foot upon them; trampling them under the feet; and saying--"These considerations shall never influence me!"
- 8. This course of conduct in holding the truth in unrighteousness, in holding the mind back from obedience, is of course decisive of the moral attitude. It is taking a deliberate stand against God. It is taking a deliberate open stand before all his subjects, and pouring contempt upon his authority, upon his moral government, and upon all the moral considerations with which he attempts to enforce obedience. It is then taking the attitude of an open rebel, an open enemy, a persistent opponent of God.

LECTURE XV.

August 28, 1861

HOLDING THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS--No. 2

Text.--Rom. 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

- 9. Holding the truth in unrighteousness is decisive of moral character. It is a state of total depravity, of total dishonesty in regard both to God and men. While the debt is admitted in words, and the obligation both to God and man in words is admitted, yet practically it is a denial of the obligation. The sinner virtually says--"I know I ought to obey God, but I will not. I know I ought to love my neighbor as myself, but I will not. I know I am indebted to God, but I will not pay him. I know I am indebted to man, but I care not for it--I will not pay him."

This, then, is making an open issue with God before the entire universe. It is a deliberate, known, practical, persistent rejection of his authority. Again, it is setting the worst possible example before God's subjects. Suppose a subject of any government to stand forth in the presence of all the subjects, and deliberately refuse to obey the laws; not merely to obey some one law, but to obey the laws in general and universally. Suppose the subject to admit the obligation, to admit the wisdom and justice, and equity, and necessity of the laws, but to obey the laws in general and universally. Suppose the subject to admit the obligation, to admit the wisdom and justice, and equity, and necessity of the laws, but for unrighteous reasons to refuse to obey them; to take a course directly opposed to them; to persist in that course, and to hold fast his persistent resistance to the authority of the government--should not the wrath of the government be revealed against such a character as that?

- 10. But again, holding the truth in unrighteousness, is the deliberate refusal to pay an acknowledged debt to God.

Suppose that some one is indebted to you. You greatly need your pay, and you go to him and demand it. He acknowledges the debt in terms, and you request him to pay it. He has the money; but he prefers to use it in some other way, to promote his own interest. You urge his obligation upon him--you tell him he ought to pay it, and he laughs you in the face, and says, "What do I care for that? Do you suppose I will be influenced by such a consideration as that? Oughtness! shall that influence me? Never!" But you remind him of the authority of God, and of his command to pay his debts. He laughs again, and says--"And who is God? And what do I care for God's commandments? Do you suppose I am to be influenced by such a consideration as that? Never!"

Now you would feel, in such a case as this, that such a deliberate refusal, and such a contempt of obligation, was a dreadful sin against you.

But just see that negligent professor of religion, see that impenitent sinner, deliberately refusing to pay an acknowledged debt to God; virtually saying to God, "What do I care for your authority? What do I care for my obligations to thee? I will not be influenced by an obligation to pay my debts either to God or man."

But again, suppose a child should take such a stand, and deliberately, and habitually, and

universally neglect obedience, refuse, omit all obedience--what would you say of such a child? Should not the parent be angry? Should not he reveal his indignation against that child?

And what would you say of your debtor, in case he should treat you in such a way? Would you not feel yourself called upon to put him in a way to pay you, if he deliberately contemned all obligation for selfish reasons, and deliberately refused to pay an acknowledged debt?

Suppose in this case you should go and sue him, and bring him before a court, and he should say, "Why, you appear to be displeased, you appear to feel indignant that I do not pay you." Would you not reply, "I have reason to be indignant. You are a scoundrel; you are a dishonest man; you contemn all moral obligation, and I will see what I can do by enforcing legal obligation."

"You treat all moral obligation with contempt; and what is left to me but to compel you to pay your debt?"

So in the case of holding the truth in unrighteousness: obligation to God is treated with contempt; God himself is treated with contempt; his authority is treated as a mere trifle; his feelings are outraged and contemned, and is it not appropriate that God should be "angry with the wicked every day," that He should have a benevolent indignation toward those who thus contemn their obligation? And is it not appropriate in Him to express or reveal this indignation, this wrath from heaven against such conduct as this? What would you think of a human ruler, who should let such conduct pass without manifesting the least displeasure at it? Or a parent, who should let such conduct pass without manifesting any displeasure at it?

The fact is, God has infinitely good reasons for being highly displeased. His wrath must be enkindled against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Now what will be said of Him if He does not manifest this wrath? What will his subjects think of Him? Can they maintain their confidence in Him? Will He not forfeit their confidence? Will He not inevitably lose the confidence of all his faithful subjects, if He neglects to manifest or reveal his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness?

REMARKS.

1. From this standpoint we can see the awful elusion of mere moralist.

There are many men who totally neglect God, and are, therefore, in the sense of this text, emphatically ungodly. They withhold from God the love, confidence, obedience, and worship which is his due, and still imagine that they are doing nothing very wrong. You speak of their danger of being lost--they are ready to say, "Why, what have I done that is bad? Whom have I wronged?" Now

the answer is plain, in the light of this text; you have wronged God out of his whole duty; you have never performed your duty to him in any sense or degree. What if you should refuse to pay your debts to men?

Suppose you were indebted to many persons, and never paid them the first cent--habitually and universally neglected to meet their just demands; and then you should set up for a moral man--should ask, "What evil have I done?"

Suppose these creditors of yours should often demand their pay, and you should as often acknowledge in words that the debts were just, and you ought to pay them, but still you should neglect and refuse to pay them, and never pay them at all; and then suppose they should complain of you, and you should say, "Why, what have I done?"--would not this be ridiculous?

But this is the manner in which you treat God; and you make little or no account of your neglect to pay what you owe to God. You would feel intensely if anybody owed you, and they should treat their obligation as you treat your obligation to God.

But just think! you are perfectly ungodly, and yet laying the flattering unction to your soul that you have done nothing very bad.

But again, you have neglected your whole duty to man as well as to God. The law of God and the law of your own conscience, requires you to love your neighbor as yourself; to regard and treat his interests as your own; to be careful of his reputation as of your own, of his feelings as of your own, of his interests as of your own. Now, have you done this? You satisfy yourself by saying you have not wronged him.

Wronged him! Have you not withheld from him that which is his due? Have you not refused to love him? refused to be interested in his welfare? Have you cared for his soul? Have you done anything to save him?

Suppose you had seen him asleep in his house, and the house on fire, and you had suffered it to burn down and consume him, and had given him no warning; and then you should say, "Wherein have I wronged him?"

The fact is, you have wronged both God and man. You have withheld from both their due, and you have no more right to claim to be a moral man than Satan has to claim to be moral. For, a mere moralist, an unconverted man, a man that neglects his duty to God and his fellow-men, as all unconverted sinners do, is void of all moral honesty; and must be, of course.

Why, how ridiculous it is for you to pretend to be morally honest, when you refuse, universally, to pay your debts. You do not hesitate to treat the claims of God, which you admit to be just, with utter contempt in your practice. You withhold from him all that is really valuable to him. For if you do not love him, if you do not regard his interests, your outward life, if it appear to be an honest and moral life, is a mere hypocrisy. Your kind treatment of your fellow men is not, and cannot be, because you love them; for if you are a mere moralist, an unconverted man, you do not love your neighbor as

yourself--you must, therefore, have some other reason than love to your neighbor for treating him kindly; it must be some other reason than real honesty of heart, and uprightness before God and man, that leads you to any appearance of honesty.

But suppose some individual owed you, and was under every possible obligation to you and yet should contemn and despise the whole, and never perform his duty, or pay you a debt, or discharge any obligation, could you believe him an honest man? No, you could not believe that he had one particle of moral honesty in him.

But suppose you should see a son who treated his own parents as you treat God--would you believe that son an honest man, however much he might boast of honesty? Would you not be convinced irresistibly that any man that could treat honorable and upright parents with the contempt with which you treat God, could not be an honest man? Would you not regard him as void of all moral honesty? Would you not say irresistibly, a man that can do that can have no honesty in his soul? I beseech you to lay aside the claim of honesty and morality, and take home to yourself the charge that you are a totally dishonest and base man, one who has no real claim to be regarded as anything other than as a wicked, unprincipled, selfish being.

2. The same must be said of many professors of religion. What an awful delusion they are under! Supposing themselves to have been converted, they live on in habitual and known transgression. Many things which they acknowledge to be their duty, they never pretend to perform.

They allow themselves all the time to live in the neglect of what every body knows, and they themselves acknowledge to be their duty; and yet they think they are justified--think they are penitent. But what idea can they have on repentance? Is not repentance the renunciation of sin?

But what is sin but withholding from God and man their due? Here then is a professor of religion that habitually withholds from God and man their due, living on in known omissions; and confessing his omission, and will continue to confess them without end, and never address himself to the performance of these duties. Now what a delusion is this! Why, on the very face of it, it is hypocrisy and a fatal delusion.

3. This text does not agree with the doctrine of inability, about which we hear so much.

There are many who are continually ready to acknowledge their short-comings, and acknowledge in words their crime; but they plead their inability to obey. Inability! and does this text teach or imply any such doctrine as that? Why, this text assumes the very opposite of the doctrine of inability. It takes the ground that men, so far from being unable to obey the commands of God, are positively resisting them. And this is in fact true.

I have already said that truth, and especially the truth of moral obligation, is the natural stimulus of the mind. It wakes it up, and compels it to act in one way or the other. Moral obligation will at once enlist and engage the energies of the soul; and unless they be actively and positively withheld, unless the truth is held back, restrained in unrighteousness, the mind will surely obey it. Here then, instead of being unable to obey, the individual is obliged to gird himself to resist, in order to prevent obedience.

Truth is a mighty impulse to draw him into conformity with itself; but, for self reasons, he girds himself and holds it back, restrains it in unrighteousness.

This then, is your inability, sinner, and professor of religion.

Truth, if you did not restrain it, would at once quicken you into activity, and into obedience. But you harden your heart, and you stiffen your neck, you resist the claims of truth and of God.

This is plainly the doctrine of this text, as it is of the Bible universally when it is properly understood.

4. Men feel that neglect is sin, when self is the object of this neglect. Parents feel that the neglect of their children is sin; husbands and wives feel that the neglect of the other party is sin; men in business feel that it is sin in their debtors to neglect to pay them, especially where this neglect is owing, not to inability, but to selfishness, or carelessness of the rights of others. Selfish men are loud in their complaints of others who neglect to pay their debts to them; but it would surely be more consistent for them to cease complaining of anybody's neglecting them, while they are neglecting to pay their debt to God. Thou that complainest that others neglect to pay their debts to you--dost thou neglect to pay thy debts to God?

5. How little stress is laid upon the neglect of duty as a sin. Now it should always be remembered that the law of God is positive. God is never satisfied with a man's doing nothing; He requires him to act, and that with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. And now when God is totally neglected, when men are ungodly and unrighteous, neglecting their duty both to God and man, how strange it is that this neglect should be so little regarded as a great and abominable sin against God, and as indeed the essence of all sin.

6. Church discipline is often a great stumbling block on this account. Men are allowed to live in fellowship with the churches, and neglect their duty habitually and notoriously; men who neglect their duties to the church and their duty to God, and live cold and formal lives, and do not hesitate in words to confess it, while they do not reform.

How strange it is that persons are allowed to remain in the church as accepted members, who so neglect their duty both to God and man.

7. Sinners are greatly misled by the church in this respect. Children in Christian families see that their parents are living in constant neglect of duty; and if they attend meetings, they hear Christians confessing that they are constantly neglecting duty, and they know very well that they expect to continue to neglect their duty. Yet very little stress is laid upon this by the church or by the ministry. Now this fatally misleads many sinners. They come to think but very little of omission of duty. The example of the church on this subject is the greatest stumbling block to them. They hear their parents say that they neglect God, and they neglect duty. Very well how little, then, do they think of neglecting their duty!

It has come to this, that the example of the Church in this respect has completely stumbled the world; so that sinners are living for scores of years in the neglect of all their duty to God, and yet do not

consider themselves as very bad sinners. They say they have done nothing very bad. Now how came they to this idea? The fact is, they have learned it from the church. They have been in the habit of hearing the church members speak of the omission and neglect of duty as a thing almost of course.

8. Orthodox neglectors of duty are the greatest sinners in the world. I have said that neglect of duty implies a knowledge of duty. Now the more orthodox in sentiment men are, and the more enlightened men are, the greater, surely, is their obligation. Those, therefore, who are truly orthodox in sentiment, but heterodox in practice, living in the neglect of their known duty, are the greatest sinners in the world.

9. From this stand-point we can also see the actual difference between real saints and sinners.

I have just spoken of professors of religion who live in the habitual neglect of duty; and of the church, which is so largely composed of mere nominal professors, as being a stumbling block to the world. Remember, then, that I am now about to speak, not of nominal professors, of negligent souls, but of real saints and sinners. But I also wish to be understood as meaning by enemies all who live in the habitual neglect of known duty. Saints are converted persons; sinners are unconverted. Saints are penitent souls; sinners are impenitent. Saints are obedient; sinners are disobedient. Both know their duty; saints do their duty; but sinners omit theirs.

With the true saint, God's will being known, is reason enough; he wants no further reason to influence his conduct. It is just this state of mind that constituted him a saint. He has given up his spirit of disobedience; he has ceased to hold truth in unrighteousness; he has yielded his mind to the influence of truth; God's will has been accepted by him; he has laid aside his rebellion and become an obedient subject of Christ.

Now mark! he wants no better or higher reason for any course of conduct than to know that such is the will of Christ.

But with the sinner, the opposite is true. He knows his duty, but this is no influential reason with him at all. He has not accepted the will of God as his rule of life. He affirms it to be his duty to do so; but he does not do it. And it is this which constitutes him an impenitent sinner.

The revealed will of God is with him no sufficient reason at all to induce obedience. He knows his duty, perhaps as well as the saint does; but he does not do it. He holds the truth in unrighteousness. Again, with the true saint, the omission of any duty is a dreadful thing. What! to disobey a command of God!

To know that God requires of him a certain course of action, and for him to refuse! Why, it is a dreadful thing! a thing not to be thought of! But with the impenitent sinner, the omission of duty is a mere trifle, a thing scarcely worth considering. He goes forward omitting all his duty, and all with as little consideration, or fear, or regret, as he would have in view of any trifle that you can name.

10. This text is more frequently suggested by facts around us than almost any other in the Bible. It is so very, very common to find persons neglecting what they know and even confess to be their duty,

and it is utterly amazing when we consider that so many of these confessors are really professors. They confess themselves to be in the habitual neglect of some duties, and perhaps of many, and yet they profess to be the children of God; they profess to be converted, to be God's saints, his holy ones. Now who can live with such surroundings without being constantly reminded of this text--"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

11. The announcement of this text ought to shock such persons like a thunder bolt. See these dreamers! this multitude of souls that are crying peace, peace, when there is no peace! neglecting their duty to God and to their fellow-men! Hark! hear the thunder of this text, and let your nerves tremble!

12. Ministers have reason to tremble for their hearers. How perfectly common it is for ministers to preach and hold out the claims of God, while their people will confess that it is truth, and that so they ought to do, but do they do so? Let such a minister watch his people. He holds out to them on the Sabbath the claims of God, and they go away, perhaps eulogizing the preaching, at any rate, they confess that they have been instructed in regard to their duty--but does he find them the next day, and every subsequent day, addressing themselves to this duty? Does he expect them to do it? Does he even expect his own church to do it? I should like to ask ministers, how many members of their church they have reason to believe, from acquaintance with them, will do their duty as soon as they are instructed in regard to it.

And I should like to ask them if it is not true that in a great multitude of instances, they have no expectation at all that the members of their church will wake up and be influenced by the truth, and will do what they know to be their duty. After preaching on the Sabbath and holding out to the church the claims of God, would they not be surprised on Monday to see the church all astir, and full of energy and vigor in carrying out the instructions of the Sabbath? How common it is for ministers to hold out the claims of God, to pour the truth upon their hearers; and then to see, right before their faces, that they hold the truth in unrighteousness. They know and acknowledge their duty, but they do not do it.

13. Let us reflect that it is the wrath of God that is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. It is the wrath of God, and therefore it cannot be resisted. It is the wrath of God, and therefore it cannot be endured. "Can thine heart endure, can thine hand be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee, saith the Lord? What then wilt thou do in the day when I shall punish thee?" Sinner and negligent professor, have you really considered what it is to have the wrath of an Omnipresent and Almighty Being revealed from heaven against you? Revealed from heaven! See, the holy mount is covered with dark clouds, the batteries are charged, the match is lighted and the Almighty is there!

Are you not afraid to pursue your course of neglect of duty, holding truth in unrighteousness? In just such a time as you think not, and when you are crying peace and safety, these batteries of Omnipotence will open upon you--the discharge will wither you in a moment--and you will sink down, down, down in the blackness of darkness forever!

What then shall you do? I answer, immediately discard this spirit of delay--lay hold upon eternal

life--let your heart go to Christ--no longer hold the truth in unrighteousness. Arise, and what you do, do quickly. Lay hold upon eternal life; for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation."

Any One Form of Sin Persisted In Is Fatal To The Soul

Lecture XVI

September 11, 1861

by Charles Grandison Finney
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Text.--James 2:10: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all."

Text.--Luke 16:10: "He that is unjust in the least, is also unjust in much."

In speaking from these words, I inquire,

I. What is it to persist in sin?

II. Any one form of sin persisted in, is fatal to the soul.

I. What is it to persist in sin?

- 1. To persist in sin is, not to abandon it. If a person should only occasionally, under the force of temptation, fall into a sin, any form of sin, and should repent and abandon it for a time, and should only occasionally be overcome by a temptation to commit that form of sin, it would not be proper to say that he persisted in it. For, according to this supposition, he is not wilful, or obstinate, or habitual in the commission of this sin; but it is rather accidental in the sense that the temptation sometimes overtakes and overcomes him notwithstanding his habitual abandonment of it and resistance to it. But if the commission be habitual, a thing allowed, a thing indulged in habitually--such a sin is persisted in.
- 2. A sin is persisted in, although it may not be outwardly repeated, if it be not duly confessed. An individual may be guilty of a great sin, which he may not repeat in the act; nevertheless, while he neglects or refuses to confess it, it is still on his conscience unrepented of, and in that sense, is still persisted in. If the sin has been committed to the injury of some person or persons, and be not duly confessed to the parties injured, it is still persisted in.

If any of you had slandered his neighbor to his great injury, it would not do for you to merely abstain from repeating that offense. The sin is not abandoned until it is confessed,

and reparation made, so far as confession can make it. If not confessed, the injury is allowed to work; and therefore the sin is virtually repeated, and therefore persisted in. Again,

- 3. A sin is persisted in when due reparation has not been made. If you have wronged a person and it is in your power to make him restitution and satisfaction, then, so long as you persist in neglecting or refusing to do so, you do not forsake the sin, but persist in it. Suppose one who had stolen your property, resolved never to repeat the act, and never to commit the like again; and yet he refuses to make restitution and restore the stolen property as far as is in his power; of course he still persists in that sin, and the wrong is permitted to remain.

I once had a conversation with a young man to this effect: He had been in the habit of stealing. He was connected with a business in which it was possible for him to steal money in small sums; which he had repeatedly done. He afterwards professed to become a Christian, but he made no restitution. He found in the Bible this text--"Let him that stole steal no more." He resolved not to steal any more, and there let the matter rest. Of course he had no evidence of acceptance with God, for he could not have been accepted. However he flattered himself that he was a Christian for a long time, until he heard a sermon on confession and restitution, which woke him up. He then came to me for the conversation of which I have spoken.

He was told that, if it was in his power, he must make restitution and give back the stolen money, or he could not be forgiven. But observe his perversion of Scripture. To be sure it is the duty of those who have stolen property to steal no more; but this is not all. He is bound to restore that which he has stolen, as well as to steal no more. This is a plain doctrine of Scripture, as well as of reason and conscience.

II. I now come to the main doctrine of our texts--that any one form of sin persisted in, is fatal to the soul.

That is, it is impossible for a person to be saved, who continues to commit any form of known sin.

- 1. It is fatal to the soul because any one form of sin, persisted in, is a violation of the spirit of the whole law. The text in James settles that: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." The law requires supreme love to God, and equal love to our fellow men.

Now sin is selfishness; and always requires the preference of self-interest and self-gratification to obedience to God, or to our duty to our fellowmen.

Whosoever, therefore, habitually prefers himself to God, or is selfish in regard to his fellow men, can surely not be a Christian. If in any one thing he violates the law of love, he breaks the spirit of the whole law, and is living in sin.

- 2. Persistence in any form of sin cannot consist with supreme love to God or equal love to our fellow men. If we love God more than ourselves, we cannot disoblige Him for the sake of

obliging ourselves. We cannot displease Him, knowingly and habitually, for the sake of pleasing ourselves.

For we supremely love whom we supremely desire to please. If we supremely desire to please ourselves, we love ourselves supremely. If we love God supremely, we desire supremely to please Him; and cannot, consistently with the existence of this love in the soul, consent to displease Him.

Under the force of a powerful temptation that diverts and partially distracts the mind, one who loves God may be induced to commit an occasional sin, and occasionally to displease God.

But if he loves God supremely, he will consent to displease Him only under the pressure of a present and powerful temptation that diverts attention and partially distracts the mind. So that his sin cannot be habitual; and no form of sin can habitually have dominion over him if he is truly a Christian.

- 3. The text in James affirms the impossibility of real obedience in one thing, and of persistent disobedience in another, at the same time. It seems to be an error too common, into which many fall, that persons can really obey God in the spirit of obedience in some things, while at the same time there are certain other things in which they withhold obedience; in other words, that they can obey one commandment and disobey another at the same time--that they can perform one duty acceptably, and at the same time refuse to perform other duties.

Now the text in James is designed flatly to contradict this view of the subject. It asserts as plainly as possible, that disobedience in any one point is wholly inconsistent with true obedience for the time being in any other respect; that the neglect of one duty renders it impossible for the time being to perform any other duty with acceptance; in other words, no one can obey in one thing and disobey in another at the same time. But,

- 4. Real obedience to God involves and implies supreme regard for His authority.

Now if anyone has a supreme regard for God's authority in any one thing, he will yield to His authority in everything.

But if he can consent to act against the authority of God in any one thing for the time being, he cannot be accepted in anything; for it must be that, while in one thing he rejects the authority of God, he does not properly accept it in any other. Hence, if obedience to God be real in anything, it extends for the time being, and must extend, to everything known to be the will of God. Again,

- 5. One sin, persisted in, is fatal to the soul, because it is a real rejection of God's whole authority. If a man violates knowingly any one of God's commandments as such, he rejects the authority of God; and if in this he rejects the authority of God, he rejects His whole authority for the time being, on every subject. So that if he appears to obey in other things while in one thing he sets aside and contemns God's authority, it is only the appearance of obedience, and not

real obedience. He acts from a wrong motive in the case in which he appears to obey. He certainly does not act out of supreme respect to God's authority; and therefore he does not truly obey Him. But surely one who rejects the whole authority of God cannot be saved.

I fear it is very common for persons to make a fatal mistake here; and really to suppose that they are accepted in their obedience in general, although in some things or thing they habitually neglect or refuse to do their duty.

They live, and know that they live, in the omission of some duty habitually, or in the violation of their own conscience on some point habitually; and yet they keep up so much of the form of religion, and do so many things that they call duties, that they seem to think that these will compensate for the sin in which they persist. Or rather, so many duties are performed, and so much of religion is kept up, as will show, they think, that upon the whole they are Christians; will afford them ground for hope, and give them reasons to think that they are accepted while they are indulging, and know that they are, in some known sin.

They say--To be sure I know that I neglect that duty; I know that I violate my conscience in that thing; but I do so many other things that are my duty, that I have good reason to believe that I am a Christian.

Now this is a fatal delusion. Such persons are totally deceived in supposing that they really obey God in anything. "He that is unjust in the least, is really unjust also in much;" and "whosoever will keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." Again,

- 6. Any form of sin persisted in is fatal to the soul, because it is inconsistent with true repentance. Sin, however great, will be forgiven if repented of. But what is repentance? Repentance is not mere sorrow for sin, but it is the heart-renunciation of sin; it is the giving up of sin from the heart, and of all sin as sin; it is the rejection of it because it is that abominable thing which God hates; it is the turning of the heart from self-seeking to supreme love to God and equal love to our fellow men; it is heart-reformation; it is heart-rejection of sin; it is heart-turning to God. Now, while any one sin is persisted in and not given up, there can be no true repentance; for after all, this form of sin is preferred to the will of God--the indulgence of sense in this particular is preferred to pleasing God. There can, therefore, be no true repentance unless all known sin be for the time utterly abandoned.
- 7. Persistence in any form of sin is fatal to the soul, because it is utterly inconsistent with saving faith. That faith is saving which actually does save from sin; and no other faith is saving, or can be. That faith is justifying which is sanctifying. True faith works by love; it purifies the heart; it overcomes the world. These are expressly affirmed to be the characteristics of saving faith. Let no one suppose that his faith is justifying when in fact it does not save him from the commission of sin; for he cannot be justified while he persists in the commission of any known sin. If his faith does not purify his heart, if it does not overcome the world and overcome his sins, it can never save him. Again,

- 8. Persistence in any one form of sin is fatal to the soul, because it withstands the power of the Gospel. The Gospel does not save whom it does not sanctify. If sin in any form withstand the saving power of the Gospel; if sin does not yield under the influence of the Gospel; if it be persisted in, in spite of all the power of the Gospel on the soul, of course the Gospel does not, cannot save that soul. Such sin is fatal. But again,
- 9. Persistence in any one form of sin is fatal to the soul, because the grace of the Gospel cannot pardon what it cannot eradicate.

As I have already said, a sin cannot be pardoned while it is persisted in. Some persons seem to suppose that, although they persist in many forms of sin, yet the grace of God will pardon sins that it has not power to eradicate and subdue. But this is a great mistake. The Bible everywhere expressly teaches this: that if the Gospel fails to eradicate sin, it can never save the soul from the consequences of that sin. But again,

- 10. If the Gospel should pardon sin which it did not eradicate, this would not save the soul.

Suppose God should not punish sin; still, if the soul be left to the self-condemnation of sin, its salvation is naturally impossible. It were of no use to the sinner to be pardoned, if left under this self-condemnation. This is plain. Let no one, therefore, think that if his sins are not subdued by the grace of the Gospel he can be saved.

- 11. But again, and lastly, sin is a unit in its spirit and root. It consists in preferring self to God.

Hence, if any form of preferring self to God be persisted in, no sin has been truly abandoned; God is not supremely loved; and the soul cannot, by any possibility, in such a case, be saved.

REMARKS.

1. What a delusion the self-righteous are under. There is no man that is not aware that he has sinned at some time, and that he is a sinner. But there are many who think that, upon the whole, they perform so many good deeds, that they are safe. They are aware that they are habitually neglecting God, and neglecting duty, that they neither love God supremely nor their neighbor as themselves; yet they are constantly prone to give themselves credit for a great deal of goodness. Now let them understand that there is no particle of righteousness in them, nor of true goodness, while they live in neglect of any known duty to man--while they are constantly prone to give themselves credit for a great deal of goodness. But they seem to think that they have a balance of good deeds.

2. How many persons indulge in little sins, as they call them; but they are too honest, they think to indulge in great crimes. Now both these texts really contradict this view. "He that is unjust in that which is least, is unjust also in much." If a man yields to a slight temptation to commit what he calls a small sin, it cannot be a regard for God that keeps him from committing great sins. He may abstain from committing great sins through fear of disgrace or of punishment, but not because he loves God. If he does not love God well enough to keep from yielding to slight temptations to commit small sins, surely he does not love Him well enough to keep from yielding to great temptations to commit great

sins. Again,

3. We see the delusion of those who are guilty of habitual dishonesties, tricks of the trade for example, and yet profess to be Christians.

How many there are who are continually allowing themselves to practice little dishonesties, little deceptions, and to tell little lies in trade; and yet think themselves Christians. Now this delusion is awful; it is fatal. Let all such be on their guard, and understand it. But again,

4. We see the delusion of those professors of religion who allow themselves habitually to neglect some known duty, and yet think themselves Christians. They shun some cross; there is something that they know they ought to do which they do not; and this is habitual with them. Perhaps all their Christian lives they have shunned some cross, or neglected the performance of some duty; and yet they think themselves Christians. Now let them know assuredly that they are self-deceived.

5. Many, I am sorry to say, preach a Gospel that is a dishonor to Christ. They really maintain--at least they make this impression, though they may not teach it in words and form--that Christ really justifies men while they are living in the indulgence habitually of known sin.

Many preachers seem not to be aware of the impression which they really leave upon their people. Probably, if they were asked whether they hold and preach that any sin is forgiven which is not repented of, whether men are really justified while they persist in known sin, they would say, No. But, after all, in their preaching they leave a very different impression. For example, how common it is to find ministers who are in this position; --You ask them how many members they have in their church. Perhaps they will tell you, five hundred. How many do you think are living up to the best light which they have? How many of them are living from day to day with a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man, and are not indulging in any known sin either of omission or commission? Who are living and aiming to discharge punctually and fully every duty of heart to God and to all their fellow men? Push the inquiry, and ask, How many of your church can you honestly say, before God, you think are endeavoring to live without sin? That do not indulge themselves in any form of transgression or omission?

They will tell you, perhaps, that they do not know a member of their church, or at least they know but very few, of whom they can say this. Now ask them further--How many of your church do you suppose to be in a state of justification? And you will find that they have the impression that the great mass of their church are in a state of justification with God; in a state of acceptance with Him; in a state in which they are prepared to die; and if they should die just in this state by any sudden stroke of Providence, and they should be called upon to preach their funeral sermon, they would assume that they had gone to heaven.

While they will tell you that they know of but very few of their church of whom they can conscientiously say--I do not believe he indulges himself in any known sin; yet let one of that great majority, of whom he cannot say this, suddenly die, and this pastor be called to attend his funeral, would he not comfort the mourners by holding out the conviction that he was a Christian, and had gone to heaven? Now this shows that the pastor himself, whatever be his theoretical views of being

justified while indulging in any known sin, is yet after all, practically an Antinomian; and practically holds, believes, and teaches, that Christ justifies people while they are living in the neglect of known duty; while they are knowingly shunning some cross; while they persist in known sin. Ministers, indeed, often leave this impression upon their churches, (and I fear Calvinistic ministers quite generally,) that if they are converted, or ever were, they are justified although they may be living habitually and always in the indulgence of more or less known sin; living in the habitual neglect of known duty; indulging various forms of selfishness. And yet they are regarded as justified Christians; and get the impression, even from the preaching of their ministers, that all is well with them; that they really believe the Gospel and are saved by Christ.

Now this is really Antinomianism. It is a faith without law; it is a Savior that saves in and not from sin. It is presenting Christ as really setting aside the moral law, and introducing another rule of life; as forgiving sin while it is persisted in, instead of saving from sin.

6. Many profess to be Christians, and are indulging the hope of eternal life, who know that they never have forsaken all forms of sin; that in some things they have always fallen short of complying with the demands of their own consciences. They have indulged in what they call little sins; they have allowed themselves in practices, and in forms of self-indulgence, that they cannot justify; they have never reformed all their bad habits; and have never lived up to what they have regarded as their whole duty. They have never really intended to do this; have never resolutely set themselves, in the strength of Christ, to give up every form of sin, both of omission and commission; but, on the contrary, they know that they have always indulged themselves in what they condemn. And yet they call themselves Christians! But this is as contrary to the teaching of the Bible as possible. The Bible teaches, not only that men are condemned by God if they indulge themselves in what they condemn; but also that God condemns them if they indulge in that the lawfulness of which they so much as doubt. If they indulge in any one thing the lawfulness of which is in their own estimation doubtful, God condemns them. This is the express teaching of the Bible. But how different is this from the common ideas that many professors of religion have!

7. Especially is this true of those who habitually indulge in the neglect of known duty, and who habitually shun the cross of Christ. Many persons there are who neglect family prayer, and yet admit that they ought to perform it. How many families are there who will even stay away from the female prayer-meeting to avoid performing the duty of taking a part of those meetings. How many there are who indulge the hope that they are saved, are real Christians; while they know that they are neglecting, and always have neglected some things. and even many things, that they admit to be their duty. They continue to live on in those omissions; but they think that they are Christians because they do not engage in anything that is openly disgraceful, or, as they suppose, very bad.

Now there are many that entirely overlook the real nature of sin. The law of God is positive. It commands us to consecrate all our powers to His service and glory; to love Him with all our heart and our neighbor as ourself. Now to neglect to do this is sin; it is positive transgression; it is an omission which always involves a refusal to do what God requires us to do. In other words, sin is the neglect to fulfill our obligations. If one neglects to pay you what he owes you, do you not call that sin, especially if the neglect involved necessarily the refusal to pay when he has the means of payment?

Sin really consists in withholding from God and man that love and service which we owe them--a withholding from God and man their due.

Now, where anyone withholds from God or man that which is their due, is this honest? Is this Christian? And while this withholding is persisted in, can an individual be in a justified state? No, indeed!

The Bible teaches that sin is forgiven when it is repented of, but never while it is persisted in. The Bible teaches that the grace of God can save us from sin--from the commission of sin, or can pardon when we repent, and put away sin; but it never teaches that sin can be forgiven while it is persisted in.

Let me ask you who are here present, do you think you are Christians? Do you think, if you should die in your present state, that you are prepared to go to heaven? That you are already justified in Christ?

Well now, let me further ask, are you so much as seriously and solemnly intending to perform to Christ, from day to day, your whole duty; and to omit nothing that you regard as your duty either to God or man? Are you not habitually shunning some cross? Omitting something because it is a trial to perform that duty? Are you not avoiding the performance of disagreeable duties, and things that are trying to flesh and blood? Are you not neglecting those around you? Are you not failing to love your neighbor as yourself? Are you not neglecting something that you yourself confess to be your duty? And is not this habitual with you?

And now, do you suppose that you are really to be saved while guilty of these neglects habitually and persistently? I beg of you, be not deceived.

8. The impression of many seems to be, that grace will pardon what it cannot prevent; in other words that if the grace of the Gospel fails to save people from the commission of sin in this life; it will nevertheless pardon them and save them in sin, if it cannot save them from sin.

Now, really, I understand the Gospel as teaching that men are saved from sin first, and as a consequence, from hell; and not that they are saved from hell while they are not saved from sin. Christ sanctifies when He saves. And this is the very first element or idea of salvation, saving from sin. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," said the angel, "for He shall save His people from their sins." "Having raised up His Son Jesus," says the apostle, "He hath sent Him to bless you in turning every one of you from his iniquities."

Let no one expect to be saved from hell, unless the grace of the Gospel saves him first from sin. Again,

9. There are many who think that they truly obey God in most things, while they know that they habitually disobey Him in some things. They seem to suppose that they render acceptable obedience to most of the commandments of God, while they are aware that some of the commandments they habitually disregard. Now the texts upon which I am speaking expressly deny this position, and plainly teach that if in any one thing obedience is refused, if any one commandment is disobeyed, no other commandment is acceptably obeyed, or can be for the time being.

Do let me ask you who are here present, is not this impression in your minds that, upon the whole, you have evidence that you are Christians?

You perform so many duties and avoid so many out-breaking sins, you think that there is so great a balance to your favor, that you obey so many more commands than you disobey, that you call yourselves Christians, although you are aware that some of the commandments you never seriously intended to comply with, and that in some things you have always allowed yourself to fall short of known duty. Now, if this impression is in your minds, remember that it is not authorized at all by the texts upon which I am speaking, nor by any part of the Bible. You are really disobeying the spirit of the whole law. You do not truly embrace the Gospel; your faith does not purify your hearts and overcome the world; it does not work by love, and therefore it is a spurious faith, and you are yet in your sins. Will you consider this? Will you take home this truth to your inmost soul?

10. There are many who are deceiving themselves by indulging the belief that they are forgiven, while they have not made that confession and restitution which is demanded by the Gospel. In other words, they have not truly repented; they have not given up their sin. They do not outwardly repeat it; neither do they in heart forsake it.

They have not made restitution; and therefore they hold on to their sin, supposing it will do if they do not repeat it; that Christ will forgive them while they make no satisfaction, even while satisfaction is in their power. This is a great delusion, and is an idea that is greatly dishonoring to Christ. As if Christ would disgrace Himself by forgiving you while you persist in doing your neighbor wrong.

This He cannot do; this He will not, must not do. He loves your neighbor as really as He loves you. He is infinitely willing to forgive, provided you repent and make the restitution in your power; but until then, He cannot, will not.

I must remark again,

11. That from the teachings of these texts it is evident that no one truly obeys in any one thing, while he allows himself to disobey in any other thing. To truly obey God in anything, we must settle the question of universal obedience; else all our pretended obedience is vain. If we do not yield the whole to God, if we do not go the whole length of seriously giving up all, and renouncing in heart every form of sin, and make up our minds to obey Him in everything, we do not truly obey Him in anything. Again,

12. From this subject we can see why there are so many professors of religion that get no peace, and have no evidence of their acceptance. They are full of doubts and fears. They have no religious enjoyment, but are groping on in darkness and doubt; are perhaps praying for evidence and trying to get peace of mind, but fall utterly short of doing so.

Now, in such cases you will often find that some known sin is indulged; some known duty continually neglected; some known cross shunned; some thing avoided which they know to be their duty, because it is trying to them to fulfil their obligation. It is amazing to see to what an extent this is true.

Sometime since an aged gentleman visited me, who came from a distance as an inquirer. He had been a preacher, and indeed was then a minister of the Gospel; but he had given up preaching because of the many doubts that he had of his acceptance with Christ. He was in great darkness and trouble of mind; had been seeking religion, as he said, a great part of his life; and had done everything, as he supposed, in his power, to obtain evidence of his acceptance.

When I came to converse with him, I found that there were sins on his conscience that had been there for many years; plain cases of known transgression, of known neglect of duty indulged all this while. Here he was, striving to get peace, striving to get evidence, and even abandoning preaching because he could not get evidence; while all the time these sins lay upon his conscience. Amazing! amazing! Again,

13. I remark, that total abstinence from all known sin, is the only practicable rule of life. To sin in one thing and obey in another at the same time, is utterly impossible. We must give up, in heart and purpose, all sin, or we in reality give up none. It is utterly impossible for a man to be truly religious at all, unless in the purpose of his heart he is wholly so, and universally so. He cannot be a Christian at home and a sinner abroad; or a sinner at home and a Christian abroad.

He cannot be a Christian on the Sabbath, and a selfish man in his business or during the week. A man must be one or the other; he must yield everything to God, or in fact he yields nothing to God.

He cannot serve God and mammon. Many are trying to do so, but it is impossible. They cannot love both God and the world; they cannot serve two masters; they cannot please God and the world. It is the greatest, and yet the most common, I fear, of all mistakes, that men can be truly, but knowingly, only partially religious; that in some things they can truly yield to God, while in other things they refuse to obey Him. How common is this mistake! If it is not, what shall we make of the state of the churches? How are we to understand the great mass of professors? How are we to understand the great body of religious teachers, if they do not leave the impression, after all, on the churches, that they can be accepted of God while their habitual obedience is only very partial; while, in fact, they pick and choose among the commandments of God, professing to obey some, while they allow themselves in known disobedience of others. Now, if in this respect the church has not a false standard; if the mass of religious instruction is not making a false impression on the churches and on the world in this respect, I am mistaken. I am sorry to be obliged to entertain this opinion, and to express it; but what else can I think? How else can the state of the churches be accounted for? How else is it that ministers have no hope that the great mass of their churches are in a safe state? How else is it that the great mass of professors of religion can have any hope of eternal life in them, if this is not the principle practically adopted by them, that they are justified while only rendering habitually but a very partial obedience to God; that they are really forgiven and justified while they only pick and choose among the commandments, obeying those, as they think, obedience to which costs them little, and is not disagreeable, and is not unpopular; while they do not hesitate habitually to disobey where obedience would subject them to any inconvenience, require any self-denial, or expose them to any persecution. Again,

14. From what has been said, it will be seen that partial reformation is no evidence of real conversion. Many are deceiving themselves on this point. Now we should never allow ourselves to believe that a

person is converted if we perceive that his reformation extends to certain things only, while in certain other things he is not reformed; especially when in the case of those things in which he is not reformed he admits that he ought to perform those duties, or to relinquish those practices. If we find him still persisting in what he himself admits to be wrong, we are bound to assume and take it for granted that his conversion is not real. Again,

15. Inquirers can see what they must do. They must abandon all sin. They must give up all to Christ; they must turn with their whole heart and soul to Him; and must make up their minds to yield a full and hearty obedience as long as they live. They must settle this in their minds; and must cast themselves upon Christ for forgiveness for all the past, and grace to help in every time of need for the future. Only let it be settled in your mind fully that you will submit yourself to the whole will of God; and then you may expect, and are bound to expect Him to forgive all the past, however great your sins may have been.

You can see, Inquirer, why you have not already obtained peace. You have prayed for pardon; you have prayed for peace; you have endeavored to get peace, while in fact you have not given up all; you have kept something back. It is a perfectly common thing to find that the inquirer has not given up all. And if you do not find peace, it is because you have not given up all.

Some idol is still retained; some sin persisted in--perhaps some neglect--perhaps some confession is not made that ought to have been made, or some act of restitution. You have not renounced the world, and do not in fact renounce it and renounce everything, and flee to Christ.

Revival- No.'s 1 - 3

Lectures XVII - XIX

by Charles Grandison Finney
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LECTURE XVII.

Oct. 9, 1861

REVIVAL--No. 1

Text.--Psa. 85:6: "Wilt Thou not receive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

In speaking from these words, I remark,

I. That a religious revival implies a previous religious declension.

II. Show when a revival of religion is needed in any church or place.

III. Some of the characteristics of a true revival of religion.

IV. A few of the indications of a revival approaching, or already commenced.

V. Some of the conditions upon which a revival may be expected to become general in a community.

VII. Some objections that are sometimes urged to revivals of religion.

I. A religious revival implies a previous religious declension.

- 1. A religious revival consists in the renewing of the love and grace of God's people, and a consequent conversion of sinners to Christ.
- 2. All Christians know what it is to have seasons, at least, of comparative declension and revival in their own experience. When a great many Christians are at the same time quickened and revived in their graces, this is what is called a revival of religion in the church, or among the professed people of God.
- 3. Such a state of things, perhaps universally, is instrumental in promoting a greater or less inquiry among the impenitent, and the conversion of many of them to Christ.

II. I will endeavor to show when a revival of religion is needed in any church or place.

- 1. It is needed when Christians have left their first love; have lost their loving zeal for Christ, and are no longer mellow and earnest, loving and zealous, as real wakeful and quickened Christians always are.
- 2. When Christians have become worldly-minded; are minding the things of this world, and have become engrossed with them.

Their conversation is worldly. They talk about politics; they talk about business and the news of the day; and are engrossed with other than the immediate work to which Christ has called them, the sanctification of their own souls, and the conversion of the world to Christ. There is sometimes a state of things in a church in which little is said among them about the conversions of souls, or about spiritual religion. They have little to say of their own experience; they have little to say to each other about Christ; in short, they have lost their interest in spiritual religion, and have become excited about, and interested in, the affairs of this world to such an extent that they may be said to be conformed to this world.

- 3. A revival of religion is needed when Christians are in reproach in consequence of their worldly-mindedness. When professed Christians become worldly-minded, lose their zeal for

Christ and become zealous about worldly matters -- enter with zeal into politics, and business, and amusements, and have little to say about Christ and His religion, it is always noticed by the worldly.

They always feel this inconsistency on the part of Christians, and are prone to speak about it. In their estimation, Christians are disgraced. They are despised for their inconsistency; and it will come to be a common thing for the impenitent to speak reproachfully of the church in such circumstances. They will not unfrequently ridicule their pretensions to piety, brand them as hypocrites, and speak of them in a manner that indicates they have no respect for their profession of godliness. When such a state of things as this exists, there is great need of a revival of religion.

- 4. When a church has fallen into a state of formality in their religious services, there is need of a revival of religion. It sometimes happens that churches become very formal and dull. Their meetings are thinly attended, and all their professed worship and prayers are exceedingly formal and lifeless. They seem to be in a state in which they are not moved to religious services by any inward impulse, or fire of love within them; but they resort to a formal round of what they call duty, and everybody can see that they have no heart in it. In such circumstances, a revival of religion is greatly needed.
- 5. A revival is greatly needed when Christians become slothful servants in religious duty. They are very neglectful of their duty to Christ, of their duty to each other, and of their duty to the impenitent. They make little or no effort to secure the great end for which the church is living, or ought to live. They are possessed with the spirit of religious indolence and laziness. They have no energy, or life, or power of godliness in them. They do everything lazily, indolently. I mean, they perform all religious duties in a slothful manner, and do not even attempt the performance of many things that they know to be their duty. They are literally slothful servants, idling away Christ's time, and seeming not even to aim at bringing anything of importance to pass in the kingdom of Christ.
- 6. A revival of religion is needed when Christians have lost their spirit of compassion for the unconverted.

When Christians are in the exercise of the Christian graces, they are compassionate; they feel for the impenitent, and they manifest this feeling. They realize their guilt and their danger, and are greatly exercised concerning them. This compassion they manifest in many ways; which manifestations greatly impress the ungodly.

But when Christians have left their first love, they lose their compassionate zeal for souls; and they manifest very little compassion even for their own children and friends. This inconsistency is noticed by the ungodly; and if professing parents or friends manifest no compassion for their unconverted children and relatives, these unconverted ones are not stirred up to feel for themselves. They sleep on in spiritual death, because no one around them manifests any care for their souls. In such a state of things a revival of religion is imperatively demanded.

- 7. A revival of religion is needed when there is little or no earnest prayer for the conversion of souls.

When the church gets into the state of which I have been speaking, you will hear very little prayer among them for the conversion of the ungodly. If they pray, you will observe that they pray only for themselves, and scarcely at all for the impenitent; and when they do pray for them, they offer but a few short requests, perhaps, that are heartless, meaningless, without fervor, without confession, without earnestness.

It is surprising to see, sometimes, how unnatural it is for professors of religion in their prayer meetings to pray for the impenitent. The fact is, you ask one, and another, and another to pray, and they will scarcely remember to pray for the impenitent at all. You can see that they pray around, and around, for themselves, and in a way that shows that they are purely selfish, in a way that shows that they care very little even for their own souls; and you can scarcely get them to pray for the ungodly, for in fact they are in such an ungodly state themselves that they cannot pray for them. Now, in such a state of things as this, a revival is greatly needed, of course.

- 8. A revival of religion is greatly needed when secret and family prayer are neglected; when prayer-meetings are neglected; when the members really dread to attend prayer-meetings, lest they should be obliged to take a part, and be called upon to lead in prayer; when they have so far backslidden that to be called upon to pray, is a trial to them. They have no heart to pray; their prayers are cold and forced; and they stay away from meetings, either because they do not like to be called upon to pray themselves, or perhaps they do not like to listen to the cold and formal prayers of their brethren.
- 9. A revival of religion is greatly needed when sectarian prejudices prevail among Christians, so far as to prevent their taking an interest in each other's experience and progress. Party walls are built up and strengthened, and great stress is laid upon the peculiarities that distinguish them as sectarians. They exalt these peculiarities into matters of such great importance, that they lose their interest in, and charity for, their brethren of other denominations. In this state they cannot pray and prevail for themselves or others; and the ungodly see it, and are shocked and stumbled by it.
- 10. A revival of religion is needed when brotherly love is so low, and so nearly extinct, that it is not natural for Christians to call each other brethren; when, in fact, it seems to them silly, and to sound like cant, to call a Christian brother, Brother. In this state they take very little interest in Christians, as such; they have very little special regard for those that are Christians because they are Christians. They do not feel for them as belonging to the same family; they do not take that fraternal interest in them that really belongs to the Christian religion.
- 11. A revival of religion is greatly needed when Christians have so far lost their brotherly love that they can speak against their brethren; speak of their faults before others; when they become censorious, instead of being tender of the reputation of their brethren, and of the cause of Christ which they represent; publish their faults endlessly to the world, speak reproachfully of them, censure them, and seem disposed to judge uncharitably of them in almost every respect. Thus

they help forward the devil's work, by shaking the confidence of the ungodly in Christians. Sometimes professors of religion do more to injure the church and the cause of Christ, to shake the confidence of the world in Christianity -- far more than it is in the power of ungodly men to do.

When professors of religion get away from God, they almost always become censorious. They speak against the church; they speak against Christians, publishing their real faults and imputing to them faults of which they are perhaps not guilty; and thus they take the most direct way to bring religion into contempt. In this state of things a revival of religion is always greatly needed.

- 12. A revival of religion is needed when professors of religion are self-indulgent.

Selfishness consists in a disposition to indulge self -- to indulge the appetites, desires, and propensities. We sometimes see professors of religion giving themselves up, like the world, to indulge themselves in a great many ways. They are pleasure-seekers; they run hither and thither just to please themselves. They will run and spend Christ's money for this object and that; they will run to this concert and that amusement; they will make this journey and that; purchase this article and that; and in a great variety of ways they will manifest a self-indulgent spirit -- in eating and drinking; in short in most of the ways in which ungodly men indulge themselves. They seem to lose sight of the fact that selfishness and self-indulgence is sin. They no longer deny themselves, and take up their cross daily and follow Christ. They have ceased to deny themselves; they have ceased to bear Christ's cross; and self-indulgence has come to be the habit of their lives. Instead of being devoted to Christ and doing all things for Him, they do everything directly or indirectly to please themselves. You see them engaging in a multitude of things which it is impossible to suppose they were doing to please Christ. It must be that they were doing these things to please themselves. It cannot be that they were running hither and thither, running to this concert and that amusement -- they cannot do this to please Christ; it must be that this is a self-pleasing spirit, the very opposite of the Christian religion. In this state of things you will often see, with all their self-indulgence, that they attend meeting on the Sabbath, and in various ways keep up the form of godliness while they deny its power. The ungodly are astonished at them, and they inquire, "Wherein do they differ from us? They seem as fond of pleasure; they seem as self-indulgent; they seem as little in earnest about religion, and as much in earnest about the world as we are." They spend their time, they spend their money, to please themselves.

Now, in such a dreadful state as this, a revival of religion is greatly needed. The church, in this state, is neglecting Christ's work, and seeking their own pleasure and their own profit.

All religious efforts in such a state as this, drag heavily. If money is needed for a Sabbath School library, for missionary purposes, or for any religious object, it is not easily obtained. The brethren do not feel like taking hold of such objects, and everything in that direction is discouraging.

- 13. A revival of religion is needed, when, as a consequence of their declension, Christians are involved in doubt in regard to their religious state.

Of course, when such is the case, they have lost the witness of the Spirit. They are aware that they have no present religious enjoyment or power. They have many doubts and misgivings whether they are really in a safe condition; and will often express these doubts, to the stumbling of the ungodly.

It is amazing to see, that sometimes professors of religion get into such a state as to think such doubts are inevitable; and that all professors of religion have them, or ought to have them.

And even ministers so far backslide, as to have such doubts habitually themselves, and preach in such a way as to encourage others in having them. Now it is always true that when religious doubts come to be the order of the day in any church, a revival of religion is greatly needed.

- 14. When Christians fall into condemnation and religious bondage, all their religious duties are up-hill and a burden to them. There is no spontaneous love service rendered by them, but everything is constrained by their consciences; and such language as this is natural to them:

"Reason I hear, her counsels weigh,

And all her words approve;

But still I find it hard t' obey,

And harder still to love."

It is natural for them to sing backsliders' hymns, such as --

"Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord?

Where is that soul-reviving view

Of Jesus and His word?"

Sometimes professors of religion get into a state in which the hymns that they naturally sing, show that they are backsliders; indicate a low, groveling, earthly state of mind; show that they are not growing in grace, but are backslidden, and are still backsliding from God. Their prayers show that they are under condemnation; their whole Christian life is one of bondage; and their religion is an up-hill affair. In such a state as this, a revival of religion is much, very much needed.

- 15. A revival of religion is very much needed, when, as a consequence of the backsliding of the

church, the preaching of the word of God is powerless. There is little or no prayer for its success; and perhaps the minister himself feels the drag and weight of his cold church hanging upon him. He goes into the pulpit in a discouraged state of mind; feels as if he were living among icebergs; and he languidly, perhaps, holds forth the word of life, but in an atmosphere so void of the Spirit of God, that the word is powerless and falls to the ground. Sinners are careless; and either stay away from meeting or attend carelessly, and perhaps sleep during the exercises. If they do not sleep, they are carelessly gazing about, very little interested in what is said, or if they are interested, it is perhaps a worldly interest which they take in the sermon, as an intellectual treat, peradventure, or a literary essay, or some other interest than a spiritual interest in what they hear.

Thus sinners are stumbled; do not know what to think of religion; and strongly doubt whether there is anything in it. They are watching professors of religion, and often musing upon their state, and endeavoring to interpret their worldly conduct in such a way as to justify themselves in their neglect of religion. They are beginning to feel a contempt for a profession of religion; and often feel irritated in their dealings with professors of religion who are in a worldly state. They thus become greatly prejudiced against religion and against the church. They have lost confidence in the sincerity of those who belong to the church, and are disposed to regard them as hypocrites. They perceive that there are alienations and dissensions among professors of religion; and such are their surroundings, and such is the conduct of professors of religion, that the ungodly generally are exceedingly careless, and hardened, and skeptical. The youth are not interested in religion; and they seldom attend the prayer-meetings, because there is nothing in the prayer-meetings to interest them. They do not feel that they need to be prayed for themselves; and if they did, they have very little confidence in the church, and would not feel that it was of any importance to say to them, "Pray for us." And thus the great mass of the young people are negligent about religion, and are given up to their frivolous, gay pursuits; the ways of Zion do mourn, and from one communion to another very few if any are coming to her solemn feasts. There are very few additions to the church; and those that do occasionally unite, perhaps unite by letter from other churches, or are doubtful cases of hopeful conversion. Now there is great need of a revival of religion in all such cases.

III. I will next notice some of the characteristics of a true revival of religion.

- 1. I said that a religious revival implies a previous religious declension. Of course, then, one of the characteristics of a true revival of religion will be, a great conviction of sin among professors of religion. They are in a very wicked state; and one of the first things that will be observed in a true revival of religion, will be a conviction of the great sin of their departure from God.

A sense of condemnation or remorse will take hold upon these backsliders; their mouths are shut, and they feel so condemned they can scarcely look up. They feel as if their sins were vastly greater from the fact that they are professors of religion. They look upon their backslidings as almost unpardonable; and oftentimes their conviction, in these circumstances, will be vastly deeper than when they were first converted.

- 2. Great humiliation will be another characteristic of a revival of religion. By humiliation I mean a getting down low before God; and disposition to confess much to God, and to their brethren; to confess in secret, to confess in public; a spontaneous getting down and humbling themselves before God and before the world. They feel as if they had been stumbling-blocks; and they wish to take the stumbling-blocks up. They feel as if they had dishonored Christianity; and they wish all men to know that they are ashamed of it, that they are sorry for it. They wish to take away the reproach, as far as possible, that they have brought upon the cause of Christ.
- 3. Another characteristic of a true revival, in such circumstances, will be, not merely confession but restitution. If in their worldly state they have been hard and oppressive in their dealings; if they have taken too high interest for money; if they have been guilty of any extortion or over-reaching in any way; if they have in any wise injured anyone, they will not rest till they have made restitution. If they are truly revived, they have now become benevolent; they now love their neighbors as themselves. They will not keep their ill-gotten gains, for they love all men now as their brethren; and they will spontaneously make restitution to them where they have done them wrong. If they have created prejudices against anyone by slander, or by censorious speeches, they will be sure to go and take up the stumbling-block. They will try to set everything right as far as they can, and undo the heavy burdens which they have put upon others.
- 4. Another characteristic of a true revival will be the giving up of false hopes on the part of those who have been deceived.

Perhaps in every church there are some who are self-deceived, supposing themselves to be Christians when they are not; and a revival of religion among those that have been really converted, tends naturally to arouse those that have been self-deceived, and to make them see and understand their delusion. In a revival of religion, there are always great searchings of heart. The Spirit of God is poured out, and all classes of persons in the church are greatly searched, and their old hopes tried. Christ comes with His fan in His hand to thoroughly purge His floor; and even sound hopes will be greatly tried; and false hopes, often in multitudes, will be swept away.

- 5. Another characteristic of a true revival will be the adjustment of difficulties.

When churches are backslidden in heart, one of the results will always be, that difficulties will arise among brethren in their business transactions; and in the various relations of life there will arise difficulties of greater or less consequence among many of the members of the church.

Difficulties also will arise between the members of the church and the world outside of the church. There will be heart-burnings and alienations, more or less, and sometimes of long standing and of great extent; but a true revival of religion is sure to bring these matters to an issue, and so far as it prevails, to lead to an adjustment of all such difficulties. The hearts of the brethren become softened, and they come to see things in a different light. They are now willing to come together and make mutual confessions; they are now willing to set everything right; they are now anxious to have all these things put

away, and to wash their hands of wrong.

- 6. Another characteristic of a true revival is a disposition on the part of the church to take up the stumbling-blocks that they have laid in the way of the ungodly.

They are aware that they have stumbled the ungodly in every way -- by their worldly-mindedness, their pleasure-seeking and their money-loving ways. But now they are anxious for the conversion of sinners; and therefore they wish to remove from before them all the occasion of stumbling which they have laid in their way. Now if they are really revived, they are sure to bestir themselves in taking up these stumbling-blocks. You must not believe that any one is really revived who is not willing to take up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of sinners. You must never have any confidence in a church, or in any members of a church, that they are truly revived in religion, while they are too proud or too negligent to take the stumbling-blocks out of the way of the impenitent.

- 7. Another characteristic of a true revival will be, the anointing of the ministry, as the chief instruments in the hand of God to carry on the work. It will be seen that there is a freshness and an unction poured upon those who are the instruments of the work.

Indeed, the characteristics of a true revival are such as will reverse the state of things that existed before, as far as the revival prevails. It will be seen that a state of things the opposite of religious declension exists both in and out of the church. Sinners will become interested and excited, will repent, will make restitution -- will, in short, become Christians.

LECTURE XVIII.

Oct. 23, 1861

REVIVAL--No. 2

Text.--Psa. 85:6: "Wilt Thou not receive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

IV. I will mention a few of the indications of a revival approaching, or already commenced.

- 1. A conviction and feeling of the necessity of a revival on the part of the church, is an indication that the work as already begun in the church.

It often happens that a backsliding church have no real sense of their state. They have no such conviction as to produce action. They have no such feeling of its existence as really to make any effort to bring about a different state of things.

- 2. But when a revival is approaching, and in fact is really begun in some hearts, this conviction ripens into action. There is a prevailing sense of the necessity of a revival; and Christians begin to talk and to pray about it, and to bestir themselves to bring about a different state of things.

They will call meetings for that purpose; inquire what shall be done, and take up the subject and act upon it. A spirit of prayer will be seen to prevail for a revival of religion. Christians begin to confess their sins, and to be in earnest about it -- the prayer meetings begin to fill up -- and a spirit of humiliation appears, and brethren do not spend their time in cold praying; they break down, and confess, and a new spirit is seen to be taking possession of them.

The expectation that a revival is coming, and the feeling that it has commenced, manifests itself; and a new order of things is manifestly about to be inaugurated. It is found that professors of religion are greatly searched; and are perhaps going to their minister and to each other to make inquires, and to request to be prayed for. Christians request the prayers of each other in their meetings or in private, and sinners are beginning to inquire what they shall do to be saved.

A solemnity prevails in the congregation and in the community. Professors of religion can more easily attend weekly prayer meetings, and are more ready for every good word and work. In short, it is seen that the subject of religion is beginning to take hold of the public mind -- that people are becoming interested and excited. The congregations on the Sabbath are more solemn; prayer meetings take on a different type; secret prayer begins to be more generally practiced, and in a different spirit; the general tone of morals is elevated; there is less running after pleasure, less censoriousness, less self-indulgence and extravagance. The church are beginning to put on strength, and the ungodly are beginning to notice it. These and such like things, are indications of a revival already commenced.

V. I will now notice some of the conditions upon which a revival may be expected to become general in a community.

- 1. It must be remembered that a revival -- what we call a revival of religion -- is commonly the revival of a great number of persons at the same time. It is an individual matter, and there can be a general revival only as the number of individuals is multiplied that are revived. Christians must first make it an individual matter to be revived individually, for there can be a revival no further than it is made an individual concern, each one securing a revival in his own soul.
- 2. This being the case, the hearts of the people must be laid open to the searching of the Spirit, and the searching of the word of God.

While people are afraid of being searched, afraid of having their hopes tried, afraid of laying their hearts open to the truth, they will never be revived.

- 3. Another condition of a revival's becoming general is, everything must be arranged in subordination to the progress of the work -- everything must be made to bend to this. I have sometimes seen that churches had prearranged a number of things to be attended to that were really of a worldly nature.

They had their machinery all in motion. They had their sewing meetings, their church social meetings, and a multitude of things that interfered greatly with holding religious meetings for prayer and effort. Now when the Holy Ghost is poured out, everything

should be made to yield to His influences; everything should be given up. For if only the same meetings are to be held, and the same course is to be pursued that has been pursued while the church was cold and formal, there is no hope of a general revival of religion. Every change must be made that is necessary to accommodate yourselves to the movements of the Holy Ghost.

Your sociables must be given up; your sewing societies and all these things that stand in the way of your giving an earnest and thorough attention to the work of revival, must be laid aside. It is often grievous to see that leading professors of religion in churches, who do not want to be revived, will try, if possible, to keep up all their pre-arrangements. And even ministers sometimes have so little sense of what are the real conditions of a general revival, that they will favor the keeping and carrying out of all their pre-arrangements, that were arranged when the church was cold, and dead, and worldly. I have often seen such obstacles as this thrown in the way, and kept in the way of a revival of religion.

I could state things that have come under my own observation that were greatly distressing. The first I would know, I would find that something was right in the way of the progress of the work. The time had come for some festival, for some Sabbath School concert -- some church frolic. The female members could not attend the female prayer meeting because they had a sewing society, and in short their stiff arrangements, made and pre-arranged when the church was cold and dead, must all be carried out; no innovation must be allowed. And yet they profess to want a revival of religion.

I myself labored in one field, where the ministers invited me, and professed to want a revival of religion, and pledged themselves to take hold of the work. But I soon found that they had pre-arranged a multitude of things that were totally incompatible with the progress of the work; and these they must carry out. One thing that they had arranged was a pleasure excursion among themselves. The first I knew, they were all off on a pleasure excursion, and I was left to promote the revival. In short, I soon found that they had no idea of making anything and everything to bend to the promotion of the work. With the exception of my meetings, they were to have everything else go on as they had pre-arranged it; and my meetings must take care of themselves, while the church and minister were just going on attending to those things which they had pre-arranged when the churches were not in a revival state.

Now it is plain that if the church is ever to repent really, and wake up, means must be used, and if the means are to be used, other things must give way. The revival meetings must be attended, and must be attended by the mass of the church. The church must give themselves to the work, not only of attending themselves, but they must interest themselves to get others, the ungodly, to attend. They must make efforts to interest each other, and to interest the whole community in the work, if the work is expected to be general. They should canvass the town, as politicians would canvass a town to see every voter. The whole community should be visited.

It is sometimes absurdly said, that if the work is a work of God; it will go on; it will not

be interfered with by this and that and the other meeting. But the fact is, the Holy Spirit converts and sanctifies men by means of the truth. Now if such is to be the result, the truth must be attended to, it must be listened to; people must give their individual attention till their convictions are deepened, and their hearts are broken.

A multitude of things must be so arranged as that the attention of the people can be given, and shall be given, to the meetings and to the means that shall be used by the Holy Spirit. Arrangements in the families should be of such a nature as to give the female members, and all classes, as much time as possible for directing their whole attention to the salvation of their own souls and the souls of those around them. Social parties and gatherings should be suspended, and laid aside; and the time of the people should be occupied with religious meetings, religious conversation and efforts. It is absurd to say, if it is the work of God it will go on in a sovereign manner, whatever course people may take in respect to giving their attention to it.

It cannot go on unless the attention of the people can be secured, and the attention of the people cannot be secured unless they make it a point to lay aside everything that would interfere with giving their full attention to the presence of the Holy Spirit, and to the truths which He presents.

The people must yield themselves up to His influences, to His teachings; they must be diligent and persevering in the use of all the means to promote their own spiritual interests, and the spiritual interests of those around them. They must give themselves to much prayer; and they must plan nothing, execute nothing, carry out no purpose that will draw people off from prayer-meetings, from preaching meetings, from their closets, and from the use of every means of grace. Let necessary business be done; for that which is strictly necessary will not ordinarily much interfere with a revival movement. But let there be no pleasure excursions; no parties of pleasure; no neighborhood, or city, or church gossip; no running hither and thither to concerts, to lectures on various subjects -- or anything of the kind. It has come to be customary in many cities and towns, as winter approaches, the season when the evenings are long and meetings can be held to advantage, to secure lecturers to deliver lectures -- popular men that will interest and please the people, and perhaps introduce a great many light, unnecessary, and foolish things.

It is doubtless the policy of Satan to absorb the public mind with these lectures; and he often gets members of the church to purchase season tickets for such a course of lectures. I have sometimes found when I entered a field of labor, that many of the members of the church were pre-engaged to attend a course of lectures. They had bought their tickets, and therefore they must attend. There is surely nothing unlawful or improper in it, they would say, by way of excuse; it will do no harm.

Now if it does no other harm than to direct attention from the work of God, that will be harm enough. And the more popular the lecturer, the more fascinating, and if you please, the more important his lectures, provided they do not fall in with the work of the Holy

Spirit in converting souls, they are all the more dangerous, and should be avoided with all the more care.

Salvation is the supreme concern of life; and when the Holy Ghost descends to work among the people in order to secure their salvation, He expects their attention. He has a right to expect it; and He cannot work unless He can secure their attention. But in attempting to secure their attention He will not violate the law of liberty of will. They must consent to be influenced, to listen, to attend to the means; and they must avoid whatever will divert attention. There is no other way; and if they will not do this, they cannot have a revival; if they will not do this they cannot be saved.

The reckless manner in which people often interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit; the manner in which they slight His presence among them; the thoughtlessness with which many persons under such circumstances will plan and execute things that are calculated in the highest degree to divert attention, is really shocking and monstrous. The first you know, someone has, perhaps, a picnic, a party, a ride, a lecture, a discussion -- a something to engage the attention of the people, and forthwith the people are drawn, like silly sheep, right into it. I say again and again, a condition, and an unalterable condition of a general revival of religion, is this: the people must give their attention to it; they must listen to the voice of God; they must avoid, as they would avoid damnation, whatever will turn them away from listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit in applying the word of God.

The minister must avoid, and resist everything that would divert attention; the church must make up their mind to introduce nothing, to countenance nothing, to allow nothing that will divert attention and draw the people off from attending to the salvation of their souls.

I was once called to labor in a revival of religion, and after our meetings had begun, I observed that a leading elder of the church was not present at one of our important meetings. I afterwards learned that he had planned a party, a large party at his house, in which they introduced dancing as a recreation; thus forsaking the meeting himself, and drawing off as many members of the church and of the congregation as he could get to attend his party. This movement immediately brought a blight upon his own soul, and was a great stumbling-block to the church. It introduced a state of bad feeling, and greatly hindered the general progress of the revival. The elder himself did not get into the work; and it was amazing to see what a blight there was upon him during the whole course of the revival. He was really well worthy of church censure, if not of excommunication. But he was a man of so much influence that they let it pass without church action; and this all the more grieved the Holy Spirit.

I can hardly lay too much stress upon this point, I have so often found when I have been called to labor in a place for the promotion of a revival of religion -- when I arrived on the ground and gave out the programme of my meetings that I wished to hold, I would find that for days, and weeks, and even months, there were certain evenings pre-occupied.

Some had arranged to have a party; others had arranged to attend secular lectures. Then they had their Sunday School concerts, or other concerts for what they call charitable purposes; they had their Sewing Societies, and perhaps some pleasure excursion or something equivalent to that. The young people had arranged to have picnics; and then, perhaps, there was two or three times a week, a singing school; and besides these, perhaps one or two of what they call donation parties; and altogether they had an arrangement entirely incompatible with any hope of a successful revival effort. If, when they came to attend the meetings, they willingly relinquished all these arrangements; if they made up their mind to give themselves up to the teachings and guidance of the Holy Spirit; if, in short, they treated God's presence, when it came to be manifested among them with the respect and awe, and attention that they ought; if they had made up their minds to make everything yield to the great movements of the Holy Ghost -- if such was the course which they adopted and pursued, they were sure to have a general revival of religion.

But if they did not take this course, but persisted in acting according to their previous plans in spite of the influences of the Holy Spirit, the revival would be curtailed just in proportion as they refused to give the Holy Ghost their whole attention.

There is a strange infatuation, it would seem, resting in many minds, on the subject of revivals, which is this: they assume that a revival of religion is altogether a miraculous affair.

It has been for a long time very common to see in the newspapers, revivals of religion reported, and great stress laid upon the fact that it came upon them without the use of means; that it came they know not how, in a sovereign manner, like a shower. And it would seem that this assumption is in the mind of the writer -- that just in proportion as it appeared to be disconnected with the use of any appropriate means, there was evidence of its being of God. Hence pains would be taken to show that it was disconnected with any appropriate means; and then it was supposed that it was surely the work of God.

But now let me say that this assumption is directly opposed to the Bible-teaching, and to the nature of things. God works by means, and through love, always observing in His works the laws of His own ordaining. In all the kingdom of nature, He uses means to accomplish His ends; and so also, in all the kingdom of grace, He uses means to accomplish His ends.

Now He converts the world by means of truth, by means of preaching the gospel, by means of religious meetings, and books, and tracts. Now who does not know this? And if this is the law of His operations, then it might be expected that a real work of God could be seen to be connected with the use of the appropriate means. This is the order in which God does everything, so far as we can see.

To assume, therefore, that if it be the work of God it will be disconnected with means, is an assumption directly opposite to the truth. If it is a work of God it may be expected that

it will be by means of religious effort, as it was in the days of the apostles, by external preaching of the gospel, by the multiplying of religious efforts and means -- prayer, and every means that can arouse and fix the attention. This has surely always been, under the old dispensation and under the new, the history of God's dealings and of God's workings, both among His people and among the impenitent. The few cases of interposition, such as the conversion of Paul, without the employment of any human instrumentality, are only exceptional -- they are but exceptions to God's mode of dealing in all time. We are therefore no more to expect that God will work without means in the kingdom of grace, than in the kingdom of nature. And as long as this assumption is in the mind of the church, that just in proportion as a thing is apart, is separated from appropriate means, there is evidence that it is the work of God -- I say just as long as this assumption is in the minds of men, they will listlessly neglect the use of appropriate means, while scores of thousands of souls go down to hell. The assumption also, that the sovereignty of God will carry on the work whatever men do to divert attention from it, is as mischievous an assumption as possible. Nothing is farther from the truth, nothing bears on its face more the impress of the teachings of the devil than teachings that represent the sovereignty of God as of such a nature that He will carry on a revival of religion whether people give their attention to Him or not.

And here I wish to make a special remark. A certain class of theologians, both in this country and in Europe, have spoken of the recent great revival as being surely the work of God, because, as they say, it was not introduced and carried forward by any human getting up, through the use of means.

Now the first remark I would make here is, that it is not true in a great many places, that the appropriate means were not used to arouse public attention, and to fix it, and to save the people.

Yet I suppose it is true that in many instances the people have become excited, and there has been a great movement where very little pains were taken to use the appropriate means. But observe, it is yet to be demonstrated that such a state of things has resulted, and is to result in a permanently healthful state of religion. I have myself been watching this movement, with its results, with the greatest interest. I have known how many persons have felt, and how a certain school of theologians have talked and written, claiming this to be peculiarly a work of God, on account, they say, of the sovereign manner in which it had been introduced and carried on. Now I could say much to show, that in most places there had been a great effort, and a great deal of prayer, and a great many looking with expectation for a revival; that this recent work had been introduced through the labors of evangelists, and pastors, and things have been culminating to that point, and there has been a general expectation among the most praying people that there was to be a great and general outpouring of the Holy Ghost; so that it is a great mistake for that class of theologians to maintain that their revival came without the use of any appropriate means. But this I admit, that when it did so increase as to be carried, to human appearance, beyond the reach of human effort, and spread beyond ministerial influence, and beyond church influence, that then it took on a peculiar type; and it was

that state of things that led these certain theologians to triumph as if this was really a work of God because it was carried by such manifest sovereignty. Now by this time some judgment can be formed of the comparative results of this revival and of those revivals that have manifestly been brought about by human instrumentality and by the use of appropriate means.

And now I appeal to those who have seen both kinds of revivals, the ministers and churches throughout this country. Which revivals have produced the most intelligent and stable converts, this last great movement that has been carried on so much apart from ministerial and church influence, or those revivals of religion that you have formerly had, in which every way was taken to promote an intelligent, thorough, deep work of grace among you?

Take the converts that you have received to your churches. Compare in your own minds the converts of this last wide-spread revival, with the converts of those revivals which you have had on former occasions, in which the greatest pains have been taken to instruct the people, to guard against deception, and to promote a revival of religion. Will not the ministers and churches throughout this country look at this? Will they not make up their minds whether there is any more evidence that this last revival is the work of God, than that those former revivals were the work of God?

At least in our field where there has been a great movement of this latter kind, a member of one of the churches told me, a few months since, that the results could not be seen. But I have no doubt that a great many have been converted, thousands and hundreds of thousands; and a great many, also, have been deceived. But the inquiry that I wish to put is this: looking at the converts of former revivals which were brought about by the diligent and persevering use of means, and at the converts of this last revival so far as it was brought about without any such use of means, which class of converts give the highest evidence of being truly the children of God? Of being useful, intelligent, and stable Christians? I think it of great importance that the church should raise this inquiry, should settle this question; for I greatly fear that many ministers and many churches are in danger of passing into the delusion that revivals will come whether they use the means or not; and that a revival is more desirable when it comes without pains being taken, special pains to instruct and enlighten the people, than when such pains are taken. I beg the churches to look at this, and the ministers to look at this. I know it is not fully time yet for them to come to an enlightened decision in regard to the results in many cases, yet will the churches keep this before their minds; for in the course of a very few years it will be made manifest to observers what has been the result of this great general movement, compared with those movements that have covered less extent of territory, but have been the immediate results of efforts designed to promote revivals.

But here let us say again, lest I should be misunderstood, it is not true that this late great revival was in its beginnings disconnected with means, so that it came upon the country like a shower of rain, nobody expecting it and nobody having any agency in promoting it.

I know full well that human agency was concerned, on a very large scale, in introducing the great movement and in promoting it; and up to a certain point it was confined to those localities where such exertions were made. Such prayer was offered as seemed to rend the heavens; and such a crying out for a general revival as perhaps this country never saw, prevailed in connection with powerful revivals of religion, for some two years before the revival broke out in the cities of New York, and Philadelphia, and Boston, and other places throughout the country.

But there was a point where an influence was manifestly shed forth upon the land far and wide, that rolled over the land like the waves of the sea; and that no doubt converted, as I have said, hundreds of thousands, and in some cases, at least, with comparatively little human effort being expended to promote it. But just in proportion as this revival was in fact disconnected with the intelligent use of appropriate means, I fear it will be found to have been disastrous in its results. I beg that this may be examined into, and the question fairly dealt with. I know myself that many good ministers stood confounded for a time. They did not know what to say. The movement seemed to be very much beyond the reach of their influence, and very much beyond the influence of the most pious members of the church -- at least this was the case in many localities.

Now the question that I ask is: what are the results, so far as it took on that type? What are the results of the movement in those cases where so much stress was laid upon its being the result of the sovereignty of God? Will the ministers and churches where the revival was of that character, that great stress was laid upon it as being the sovereign work of God without the interposition of man -- will you say, as in view of the solemn judgment, what has been the result of that type of this movement? I mean, what are the results, compared with the results of those revivals that have so long blessed this land; and that were conducted on gospel principles, through the instrumentality of preaching, prayer meetings, and the diligent use of all the means of grace?

Which form of revival appears to be most desirable from the results? This is a fair question, and I hope the church may be able intelligently to answer it.

- 4. Too much stress cannot be laid upon prayer in the promotion of revivals of religion. There has been a great deal of prayer connected with the recent movement; and there has always been a great deal of prayer connected with those revivals that have been promoted by the diligent use of the means of grace.

Prayer has been the watchword. There has been a great deal of secret prayer, a great deal of social prayer, a great deal of public prayer. In short, men and women have given themselves to prayer, and in many instances they have prayed all night in their closets; and sometimes in social circles their minds have been exceedingly filled with prayer, and they have cried mightily to God.

But nevertheless, if the church has been thoroughly refreshed and revived, they have got a blessing that they will not lose. It will work out permanent results and reformation among them.

- o (1.) It will be seen, after days and years, that they know more of God; are more holy and more useful. In many cases, I have known ministers to say, "My church is a new church. They are a very different people from what they used to be -- more ready to every good word and work, more watchful, more prayerful, more humble, more united, more self-denying, more ready to use means for a revival of religion than at any other time; in short, they are altogether a different and a better people."
- o (2.) The same will be true of the world. That is, if the work becomes general, it will be seen that there is a great reformation in the community.,

Those who live through it and harden themselves, and remain unconverted, will wax worse and worse; and perhaps behave worse afterwards than before. But if the revival has been general, a large number have been converted; and it will be seen that it has produced its effect upon the whole community. Sabbath desecration, drunkenness, and every form of vice have been made in a measure to hide their head. The public sentiment has been formed; the public conscience has been aroused; the fear of God has pervaded the community; and for a generation the influence of that revival will be seen in that community.

Many more things I might say under this head, but I must pause here for the present.

LECTURE XIX.

Nov. 6, 1861

REVIVAL--No. 3

Text.--Psa. 85:6: "Wilt Thou not receive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

VII. I will now notice some objections that are sometimes urged to revivals of religion.

- 1. It is objected to them that there is a great deal of excitement connected with them.

To this I reply,

- o (1.) Is there not a good reason for excitement? What is excitement but a quickened activity of the Intelligence, of the Sensibility, and of the Will? Now is there not everything in religion that is calculated to excite the mind? Can it avoid being excited if it has any realizing apprehension of the great truths of religion? Men may be excited on any and every other subject; and why not be excited on the subject of religion?

Indeed, politicians, business men, all classes of men, if they wish to secure public action on any subject, try to excite the people, to interest them, to get their attention. to arouse them to excited action and feeling. Now this is all philosophical; it is common sense, as every one knows. Now why should not

this be done on the subject of religion? Is there not the best of all reasons for being excited on this subject?

- o (2.) I would ask those who make this objection, if they really expect an individual case of sound conversion to occur without any excitement. Suppose a professed convert were to come and make application for admission into the church. You ask him, as usual, to tell his religious experience, his reason for thinking himself a Christian. Now suppose in his narrative there should be no appearance of his having any peculiar interest in religion. You find that he has not been excited at all; there has been nothing unusual occurring in his mind so far as its excited state on religious questions is concerned.

Would you believe him a true convert? Would you not tell him, No Sir; the fountain of the great deep in your heart has not been broken up. You have not been truly convicted of sin; you have not truly come to Christ with all your heart.

But suppose, on the contrary, you found that he had been strongly but intelligently excited; that he had had true conviction of sin; that the fountain of the great deep had been broken up in his soul; and suppose he should tell you an experience which showed that the whole power of his being had been drawn into action in his religious experience -- who is there among you who would not prefer this form of experience in an individual case? Very well? now what is a revival but the occurrence of many such cases at the same time? Where masses are convicted, the great mass of professors greatly stirred up and interested in the salvation of souls, and individual cases of conviction and conversion are multiplied till it moves the community. This is the case in a general revival of religion. Here then is a general excitement -- but is there not good reason for it? What objection is there to all this? What otherwise could be expected?

What otherwise could be desired? It is the very thing that is needed. It is the very manner in which God has always wrought. Why, then, is excitement objected to as connected with revivals of religion? The objection is manifestly absurd. Could you be made, in short, to believe that that was a true revival of religion where there should be no excitement manifested by the church or the world? No; you could not believe that it was. In every age of the world when the Spirit of God has been poured out, men have been convicted of sin and the truth of God has been made plain by the Holy Ghost. It has aroused the community; it has moved individual minds; and even the masses have been moved as the trees of the forest are moved in a tempest. And what is the objection to all this? There is no valid objection to it.

- 2. Danger of delusion.

Many persons have the impression that converts are much likely to be deceived, or to obtain a false hope, in a revival of religion, than when they are more calm, and when

there are no external circumstances of excitement, and no revival. But why should this be so?

- o (1.) In the first place, if a revival is judiciously managed; if the preaching be thorough, and searching, and practical; if it be to the point; if it strip away the sinner's refuges; if it shut him up to Christ, and real revival preaching always does -- why should there be more danger of delusion under such circumstances, though many are attending to it at the same time? The reason that has been assigned for this danger is this: they say that many are affected by sympathy. They see others affected, and they become affected by sympathy. Now, what is intended by this? Is it supposed that the Holy Ghost never works through the principle of sympathy in human beings? Is this assumed? If it is, the assumption is as false as possible. Why set human beings to persuade human beings? Why set friends to labor with friends? The fact is, that through what we call sympathy, the Holy Ghost works largely, and always did. The very tears the minister sheds when preaching to the ungodly -- these tears preach, as well as the words. The look of anguish, the look of affection, the earnestness of manner and voice -- why these all preach; these all communicate truth; these all serve to impress the mind, and give to the audience a higher appreciation of the truths of the Gospel. Just so the tears that accompany the pleadings of young converts; their earnest appeals; the concern which they manifest for souls; the love which they manifest for Christ; all this, to be sure, is calculated to excite sympathy, but also to beget attention, to make the truth appear to be truth, and everything of this kind.

All the earnestness of the community, all the earnestness of converts, all the earnestness of convicted sinners -- all the whole movement in a revival, is preaching. It is the loudest, most effectual appeal to the conscience and the heart of all around. It serves to make truth real and to wake up an interest in the masses; and it seems as if it were next to impossible that persons should be deceived. So many instrumentalities are used, and there is so much on every side to make truth real, that if ever we might expect persons truly to embrace the truth, truly to understand the truth, truly to be subdued by it, these are the very circumstances under which we should expect such results.

- o (2.) But, an examination has been made on a large scale for the very purpose of testing this question, and deciding it.

A pamphlet was given to me a few years ago, containing statistics that had been gathered upon this subject by great painstaking. There had been in one of our large cities, and throughout a large district of country surrounding it, a very general revival of religion. It had been conducted mostly by a man who had been accused of being loose in his instructions, and of using a good deal of art in arresting attention and making an impression. When I heard of the manner in which those revivals were conducted, my own fears were excited. I must confess that I strongly doubted the result of such a method of conducting revivals; and indeed I do not now believe that this was a proper method of conducting revivals of religion.

After those revivals had passed some two or three years, those that opposed them began to cry out that the converts had all fallen away. Several ministers were deceived by this cry, and united in it. Those revivals were greatly stigmatized; and I had myself the impression, from what I had heard, that they had turned out disastrously.

But a good man, who lived in the region where the revival occurred, instituted an inquiry in every church to which that revival had extended. He requested the pastors to examine the church books, and see how many converts, received as the fruits of these revivals, had backslidden, had been dealt with, or censured, or deserved censure by the church. He wished to know the proportion of the whole number received that had fallen away; and he desired the pastor to compare this with the number that had fallen away, who had been received into the church when there was no revival, and not as the fruit of a revival. The pastors made the returns to him in writing. I cannot now recollect the exact proportion; but of those that had been received as the fruit of those revivals, the number of backsliders was proportionately much smaller than was the number of backsliders among those who had been received as converted when there was no revival of religion.

This report was made four years after the revival had passed by.

Again, after four years more, making in the whole eight years, he made the same inquiry, and received substantially the same answer; that the backslidings of those who had been received as fruits of all those revivals were much less than of the same number of persons received into the church as converted when there were no revivals. These reports included a great number of churches, and a great number of converts. The result was published, as I have said; and one of the pamphlets was handed to me, which I have mislaid, or I should quote from its pages. This was highly satisfactory to me, because I had had more fears of the result than of almost any of which I have heard in this country. The examination was most fair, and the result most gratifying to the friends of revivals. But indeed, this is as might be expected. When everything favors the conversion of souls, we might expect, if ever, that they would be truly converted.

- (3.) But, very much depends on the instruction given and the course pursued.

In the case to which I have referred, the pastors in that region of country were sound in doctrine; and no doubt, so far as their influence went, they gave sound instruction. The evangelist to whom reference has been made, is doubtless a good man, and gave correct instruction; and the means he used to make an impression, over and above the direct preaching of the gospel, although to some extent, perhaps, injurious, still did not so vary the result as to render the effect abortive, by any means.

I cannot recollect the exact proportion of backsliders as stated in the pamphlet. The impression on my mind is that it was much larger, however, than I have been in the habit of witnessing in revivals that have come under my own observation.

But still, as I have said, the proportion of those that fell away was very much less than the fallings in the same number of those that had been received when there was no revival. So that delusions under revivals conducted in that manner were not so common by any means as delusions that occur when there is no revival at all.

- (4.) But again, why should this not be so? When everything surrounds men that is calculated to impress them with the truth, as is the case in a revival of religion, why should they not be more likely to understand and embrace it aright, than when everything around them has a different tendency, as is the case when there is no revival of religion and the church is in a comparatively worldly state.

But, as I said, very much will depend on the course of instruction pursued, and upon the whole manner in which the thing is conducted from beginning to end. If the conduct of the work, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, be scriptural; if the preaching of the gospel be plain, and pungent, and adapted to secure sound conversion; if there is much prayer and labor on the part of God's people; if the convicted are not properly encouraged to entertain hope; if too much stress is not laid upon emotion, but the Will is thoroughly carried by the truth -- there is indeed very little danger of delusion under such circumstances, as I can testify from an experience of many years of this kind of work.

To be sure, converts will sometimes wax comparatively indifferent; but so far as my experience is concerned, they almost universally hold out better than the old members of the church that were converted when there was no revival.

I have often heard pastors testify to this, when I have inquired how the converts held out that were converted in those seasons when I had been present. The reply has been in substance, that they were the most efficient members of the church; that they held on their way a great deal better than the old members that had been received, not as the fruit of a revival, but as the fruit of ordinary ministrations in ordinary times.

Indeed, converts of powerful revivals of religion have more light, more love, more power, more consistency, greater usefulness by far than those who have joined the church when there was no revival of religion. This I believe will be the testimony of all the pastors and ministers in this country who have been acquainted with revival work. If this is not so, when this sermon comes

to them let them speak out and bear opposite testimony, if an opposite testimony is the true one.

- 3. Third objection -- Re-action.

It is complained, in many case, that after a great excitement and religious revival, there is apt to be a great re-action; that the meeting will not be as well attended, that the church waxes cold and worldly, and that a discouraging state of things often succeeds a revival of religion.

To this I reply --

- (1.) What is intended by re-action? It is true that there may not be as much excitement when the great mass of the community, or of the congregation, is converted. There may not be the same manifestation of feeling on the part of the church for the ungodly, or the same manifestation of fervor and overwhelming feeling that were exhibited by the converts on their first conversion; but surely this is not necessarily a re-action, in the sense that there is really less piety in the church when the circumstances are so changed as that the manifestations would naturally be changed.
- (2.) But, if the meetings should be less fully attended, and much less interest manifested than there was in the revival, the question should be asked, Is there less interest manifested than there was before the revival? I doubt whether any such case as that has occurred. To be sure, there may be a real decline after a real revival; but does the decline carry the state of things back even behind where it was before the revival? I doubt whether such a case has ever occurred, where there has been a real revival of religion.

But, so far as my own experience is concerned, I have never seen any re-action or falling away equal to that of which the apostles themselves complained in their day. It would seem from the writings of Paul, that a great re-action, or decline, or whatever you please to call it, occurred after the revivals that passed over the Roman empire under his ministry, and the ministry of the other apostles and evangelists. This is as might be expected, even were those revivals as pure as could be expected under the circumstances. The people whom the apostles taught were heathen. They had no written Bibles, or very few; they had none of the means to render converts stable that we now have. The ignorance of those idolaters that were converted to Christianity, their habits, and the state of society and their general surroundings should lead us to expect great backslidings. Nothing less than a constant miracle could have sustained them in their first love.

But we in this country are under very different circumstances. We abound in the means of instruction; and of course on every side, as might be expected, converts are, as a general thing, much more stable. There are much fewer fallings away, much fewer cases of positive and gross backsliding, than in the days of the apostles, if we are to gather the facts from their own writings.

Indeed, I doubt if the world has ever witnessed revivals more pure, more powerful, more lasting and desirable in their results than those that have occurred in this country during the last forty or fifty years. If my health will allow, I hope to write some account of the revivals that have occurred under my own observation, and since I have been in the ministry, for the purpose, if possible, of disabusing the minds of those who have been prejudiced against those revivals by false reports.

- 4. "Is there not a better way?"

I answer to this,

- (1.) If there is, it is hoped that someone will show it. The history of the church in all time has proven, that this has been God's way hitherto of sustaining and promoting in religion the world. If He knows of a better way, He will doubtless introduce it. As circumstances have been, and as results have been, we are bound to infer that this has hitherto been the best way -- the best way with which He is acquainted, and that could be pursued consistently with the moral freedom of the race.
- (2.) I answer, without revivals of religion, facts demonstrate that in all countries religion has become formal. I have been struck with this everywhere -- wherever there is opposition to revivals of religion, I find formality the leading feature of their Christianity. But should this not be so? Every Christian knows that in his history he has been subject to elevations and depressions, to comparative listlessness and then to great fervor; that he has alternated between comparative backsliding in heart, and real zeal and energy in religion; and that his seasons of comparative coldness have sometimes continued for a series of weeks or months until he has been distressed, convicted, and revived, and his religion has taken on again a fervent type.

Now this is the history, if I mistake not, of the Christian religion as it exists in individual minds.

Now suppose that it comes to pass that these elevations and depressions occur, not merely in an individual mind, but in the minds of a church, a community, a cluster or collection of churches throughout a region of country; then here we have revivals and declensions.

The declensions cannot be denied; and is it not a great pity to have the declensions continue, and no revival?

I have been astonished and grieved to hear professors of religion oppose revivals, who themselves need reviving, if ever anybody does. They will say -- "I believe that Christians ought always to be awake, ought always to be revived." Yes, I say, but are you revived? Are you awake?

They hold that Christians ought to be revived and so do I. But what shall we do in case they are not what they ought to be?

It is well for cold professors of a cold church to say, "We believe that Christians ought always to be awake. We do not believe in spasmodic religion; we believe that we should always be in a revival state."

Yes, I reply; and so do I. But are you in it? Are you always awake? Are you now in a revived state? If not, whatever your theory may be, you need a revival; and you must be revived, or you will lose your soul.

REMARKS.

1. And now I inquire, first, do you need a revival in your own soul, in your church, in your congregation? I say, do you need one? In view of what has been said, are not the circumstances such, as to prove that you greatly need a revival here?

2. Do you want one? You may need it, yet not be disposed to have it. Are you willing to be revived? Or, rather, do you desire it? For if you truly will it, you are revived already.

Do you feel its necessity? Are you ready to make the sacrifices essential to promote it? Are you ready to lay aside every weight and every other concern, and enter heart and soul into the promotion of a revival of religion in this place? Are you ready to fulfill all the conditions upon which a revival can be had?

3. What a responsibility rests upon you! "Thy Master has come, and calleth for thee," might be said to you.

For is not the Spirit already beginning to work and to be manifest as the Spirit of Christ among you? Now will you throw your hearts open to be searched? Will you consent yourselves to be individually revived at any cost? Will you make confession and restitution, and remove the stumbling-blocks out of the way? Will you lay aside a worldly fastidiousness, and be willing to be dealt with, in the pulpit and out of the pulpit, as the circumstances demand?

Will you lay aside prejudice, and be willing to be instructed? And lastly, will you give yourselves individually to the work? And will you heartily co-operate in the use of the means for the salvation of those around you?

Now will you decide this at once? And may God help you, in view of the solemn Judgment, to decide as you will wish you had when you stand before Him!

GLOSSARY

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

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.
3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it

consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.

8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.

End of the 1861 Collection.