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# "The Oberlin Evangelist"

Publication of Oberlin College

Sermons and Lectures given in 1840

by

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GLOSSARY

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

**Sanctification- No.'s 1 - 9**

Lectures I - IX

January 1 - April 22, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney

President of Oberlin College

from "The Oberlin Evangelist" Publication of Oberlin College

In discussing the subject of Sanctification, I design to pursue the following order.

*I. Define the meaning of the term sanctification.*

*II. What I understand by entire sanctification.*

*III. Notice the distinction between entire and permanent sanctification.*

*IV. Show what is not implied in entire sanctification.*

*V. What is implied in entire sanctification.*

*VI. Show that this state is attainable in this life.*

*VII. Answer some objections.*

*VIII. Show when it is attainable.*

*IX. How it is attainable.*

LECTURE I.

January 1, 1840

**SANCTIFICATION- No. 1**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole

spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

It will be seen at once, that this outline is sufficiently extensive to fill a large volume, should I protract the discussion as I easily and perhaps profitably might. And at best it will occupy several lectures. My design is to condense what I have to say as much as possible, and yet preserve sufficient perspicuity. I shall endeavor not to be tedious. And yet I hope to be understood, and to be able to "commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." I will now,

### **I. Define the term Sanctification.**

Here let me remark, that a definition of terms in all discussions is of prime importance. Especially is this true of this subject. I have observed that almost without an exception those who have written on this subject dissenting from the views entertained here, do so upon the ground that they understand and define the terms, Sanctification and Christian Perfection, differently from what we do. Every one gives his own definition, varying materially from each other and from what we understand by the terms. And then they go on professedly opposing the doctrine as inculcated here. Now this is not only utterly unfair, but palpably absurd. If I oppose a doctrine inculcated by another man I am bound to oppose what he really holds. If I misrepresent his sentiments "I fight as one that beateth the air." I have been amazed at the diversity of definitions that have been given to the terms Christian Perfection, Sanctification, &c.; and to witness the diversity of opinion as to what is, and what is not, implied in these terms. One objects wholly to the use of the term Christian Perfection, because in his estimation it implies this and that and the other thing, which I do not suppose are at all implied in it. Another objects to our using the term Sanctification, because that implies, according to his understanding of it, certain things that render its use improper. Now it is no part of my design to dispute about the use of words. I must however use some terms; and I ought to be allowed to use Bible language, in its Scriptural sense as I understand it. And if I should sufficiently explain my meaning and define the sense in which I use the terms, this ought to suffice. And I beg that nothing more nor less may be understood by the language I use than I profess to mean by it. Others may, if they please, use the same terms and give a different definition of them. But I have a right to hope and expect if they feel called upon to oppose what I say, that they will bear in mind my definition of the terms, and not pretend, as some have done, to oppose my views while they have only differed from me in their definition of the terms used, giving their own definition varying materially and I might say infinitely from the sense in which I use the same terms, and then arraying their arguments to prove that according to their definition of it, Sanctification is not really attainable in this life when no one here or any where else, that I ever heard of pretended that in their sense of the term, it ever was or ever will be attainable in this life, and I might add, or in that which is to come.

Sanctification is a term of frequent use in the Bible. Its simple and primary meaning is a state of consecration to God. To sanctify is to set apart to a holy use-- to consecrate a thing to the service of God. A state of sanctification is a state of consecration or a being set apart to the service of God. This is plainly both the Old and the New Testament use of the term.

### **II. What is entire Sanctification.**

By entire sanctification, I understand the consecration of the whole being to God. In other words it is that state of devotedness to God and his service, required by the moral law. The law is perfect. It requires just what is right, all that is right, and nothing more. Nothing more nor less can possibly be Perfection or entire Sanctification, than obedience to the law. Obedience to the law of God in an infant, a man, an angel, and in God himself, is perfection in each of them. And nothing can possibly be perfection in any being short of this, nor can there possibly be any thing above it.

### **III. The distinction between entire and permanent Sanctification.**

That a thing or a person may be for the time being wholly consecrated to God, and afterwards desecrated or diverted from that service, is certain. That Adam and "the angels who kept not their first estate" were entirely sanctified and yet not permanently so is also certain.

By permanent sanctification, I understand then a state not only of entire but of perpetual, unending consecration to God.

### **IV. What is not implied in entire Sanctification.**

As the law of God is the standard and the only standard by which the question in regard to what is not, and what is implied in entire Sanctification is to be decided, it is of fundamental importance that we understand what is and what is not implied in entire obedience to this law. It must be apparent to all that this inquiry is of prime importance. And to settle this question is one of the main things to be attended to in this discussion. The doctrine of the entire sanctification of believers in this life can never be satisfactorily settled until it is understood. And it cannot be understood until it is known what is and what is not implied in it. Our judgment of our own state or of the state of others, can never be relied upon till these inquiries are settled. Nothing is more clear than that in the present vague unsettled views of the Church upon this question, no individual could set up a claim to having attained this state without being a stumbling block to the Church. Christ was perfect, and yet so erroneous were the notions of the Jews in regard to what constituted perfection that they thought him possessed with a devil instead of being holy as he claimed to be. It certainly is impossible that a person should profess this state without being a stumbling block to himself and to others unless he and they clearly understand what is not and what is implied in it. I will state then what is not implied in a state of entire sanctification, as I understand the law of God. The law as epitomized by Christ, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself," I understand to lay down the whole duty of man to God and to his fellow creatures. Now the questions are what is not, and what is implied in perfect obedience to this law? Vague notions in regard to these questions seem to me to have been the origin of much error on the subject of entire sanctification. To settle this question it is indispensable that we have distinctly before our minds just rules of legal interpretation. I will therefore lay down some first principles in regard to the interpretation of law, in the light of which, I think we may safely proceed to settle these questions.

Rule 1. Whatever is inconsistent with natural justice is not and cannot be law.

Rule 2. Whatever is inconsistent with the nature and relations of moral beings, is contrary to natural justice and therefore cannot be law.

Rule 3. That which requires more than man has natural ability to perform, is inconsistent with his nature and relations and therefore is inconsistent with natural justice, and of course is not law.

Rule 4. Law then must always be so understood and interpreted as to consist with the nature of the subjects, and their relations to each other and the law-giver. Any interpretation that makes the law to require more or less than is consistent with the nature and relations of moral beings, is a virtual setting aside of law or the same as to declare that it is not law. No authority in heaven or on earth can make that law, or obligatory upon moral agents, which is inconsistent with their nature and relations.

Rule 5. Law must always be so interpreted as to cover the whole ground of natural right or justice. It must be so understood and explained as to require all that is right in itself, and therefore immutably and unalterably right.

Rule 6. Law must be so interpreted as not to require any thing more than is consistent with natural justice or with the nature and relations of moral beings.

Rule 7. Of course laws are never to be so interpreted as to imply the possession of any attributes or strength and perfection of attributes which the subject does not possess. Take for illustration the second commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Now the simple meaning of this commandment seems to be that we are to regard and treat every person and interest according to its relative value. Now we are not to understand this commandment as expressly or impliedly requiring us to know in all cases the exact relative value of every person and thing in the universe; for this would imply the possession of the attribute of omniscience by us. No mind short of an omniscient one can have this knowledge. The commandment then must be so understood as only to require us to judge with candor of the relative value of different interests, and treat them according to their value so far as we understand it. I repeat the rule therefore. Laws are never to be so interpreted as to imply the possession of any attribute or strength and perfection of attributes which the subject does not possess.

Rule 8. Law is never to be so interpreted as to require that which is naturally impossible on account of our circumstances. E.g.: The first commandment. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c." is not to be so interpreted as to require us to make God the constant and sole object of attention, thought, and affection, for this would not only be plainly impossible in our circumstance but manifestly contrary to our duty.

Rule 9. Law is never to be so interpreted as to make one requirement inconsistent with another; e.g.: if the first commandment be so interpreted that we are required to make God the only object of thought, attention, and affection, then we cannot obey the second commandment which requires us to love our neighbor. And if the first commandment is to be so understood that every faculty and power is to be directed solely and exclusively to the contemplation and love of God, then love to all other beings is prohibited and the second commandment is set aside. I repeat the rule therefore. Laws are not to be so

interpreted as to conflict with each other.

Rule 10. A law requiring perpetual benevolence must be so construed as to consist with and require all the appropriate and essential modifications of this principle under every circumstance; such as justice, mercy, anger at sin and sinners, and a special and complacent regard to those who are virtuous.

Rule 11. Law must be so interpreted as that its claims shall always be restricted to the voluntary powers. To attempt to legislate over the involuntary powers would be inconsistent with natural justice. You may as well attempt to legislate over the beatings of the heart as over any involuntary mental actions.

Rule 12. In morals, actual knowledge is indispensable to obligation. The maxim, "ignorantia legis non excusat"-- ignorance of the law excuses no one, applies in morals to but a very limited extent. That actual knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation, will appear,

(1.) From the following Scriptures:

James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Luke 12:47-48, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.; and to whom men have committed much, of them they will ask the more." John 9:41, "Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth." In the first and second chapters of Romans, the Apostle reasons at large on this subject. He convicts the heathen of sin, upon the ground that they violate their own conscience, and do not live according to the light they have.

(2.) The principle is every where recognized in the Bible, that an increase of knowledge increases obligation. This impliedly, but plainly recognizes the principle that knowledge is indispensable to, and commensurate with obligation. In sins of ignorance, the sin lies in the ignorance itself, but not in the neglect of what is unknown. A man may be guilty of present or past neglect to ascertain the truth. Here his ignorance is sin. The heathen are culpable for not living up to the light of nature; but are under no obligation to embrace Christianity until they have the opportunity to do so.

Rule 13. Moral laws are to be so interpreted as to be consistent with physical laws. In other words, the application of the moral law to human beings, must recognize man as he is, as both a physical and intellectual being; and must never be so interpreted as that obedience to it would violate the laws of the physical constitution, and prove the destruction of the body.

Rule 14. Law is to be so interpreted as to recognize all the attributes and circumstances of both body and soul. In the application of the law of God to human beings, we are to regard their powers and attributes as they really are, and not as they are not.

Rule 15. Law is to be so interpreted as to restrict its obligation to the actions, and not to the nature, or constitution of moral beings. Law must not be understood as extending its legislation to the nature, or requiring a man to possess certain attributes, but as prescribing a rule of action. It is not the existence or possession of certain attributes which the law requires, or that these attributes should be in a certain state of perfection, but the right use of all these attributes as they are, is what the law is to be interpreted as requiring.

Rule 16. It should be always understood that the obedience of the heart to any law, implies and includes general faith, or confidence in the lawgiver. But no law should be so construed as to require faith in what the intellect does not perceive. A man may be under obligation to perceive what he does not; i.e.: it may be his duty to inquire after, and ascertain the truth. But obligation to believe with the heart, does not attach until the intellect obtains a perception of the things to be believed.

Now, in the light of these rules, let us proceed to inquire,

*1. What is not, and,*

*2. What is implied in perfect obedience to the law of God, or in entire sanctification.*

- 1. Entire sanctification does not imply any change in the substance of the soul or body, for this the law does not require, and it would not be obligatory if it did, because the requirement would be inconsistent with natural justice. Entire sanctification is the entire consecration of the powers, as they are, to God. It does not imply any change in them, but simply in the use of them.
- 2. It does not imply any annihilation of constitutional traits of character, such as constitutional ardor or impetuosity. There is nothing certainly, in the law of God that requires such constitutional traits to be annihilated, but simply that they should be rightly directed in their exercise.
- 3. It does not imply the annihilation of any of the constitutional appetites, or susceptibilities. It seems to be supposed by some, that the constitutional appetites and susceptibilities, are in themselves sinful, and that a state of entire sanctification would imply their entire annihilation. And I have often been astonished at the fact that those who array themselves against the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, assume the sinfulness of the constitution of men. And I have not been a little surprised to find that some persons who I had supposed were far enough from embracing the doctrine of physical depravity, were, after all, resorting to this assumption to set aside the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life. But let us appeal to the law. Does the law any where, expressly or impliedly, condemn the constitution of man, or

require the annihilation of any thing that is properly a part of the constitution itself? Does it require the annihilation of the appetite for food, or is it satisfied merely with regulating its indulgence? In short, does the law of God any where require any thing more than the consecration of all the appetites and susceptibilities of the body and mind, to the service of God?

In conversing with a brother, upon this subject, not long since, he insisted that a man might perpetually obey the law of God and be guilty of no actual transgression, and yet not be entirely sanctified: for he insisted that there might be that in him which would lay the foundation for his sinning at a future time. When questioned in regard to what that something in him was, he replied, "that which first led him to sin at the beginning of his moral existence." I answered that that which first led him to sin, was his innocent constitution, just as it was the innocent constitution of Adam, to which the temptation was addressed, that led him into sin. Adam's innocent constitutional appetites, when excited by the presence of objects fitted to excite them, were a sufficient temptation to lead him to consent to prohibited indulgence, which constituted his sin. Now just so it certainly is with every human being. This constitution, the substance of his body and soul, cannot certainly have any moral character. But when these appetites which are essential to his nature and have no moral character in themselves are excited, they lead to prohibited indulgence, and in this way every human being is led into sin. Now if a man cannot be entirely sanctified until that is annihilated which first occasioned his sin, it does not appear that he ever can be entirely sanctified while he possesses either body or soul. I insist upon it, therefore, that entire sanctification does not imply the annihilation of any constitutional appetite or susceptibility, but only the entire consecration of the whole constitution as it is, to the service of God.

- 4. Entire sanctification does not imply the annihilation of natural affection or resentment. By this I mean that certain persons may be naturally pleasing to us. Christ appears to have had a natural affection for John. By natural resentment I mean, that, from the laws of our being, we must resent or feel opposed to injustice or ill treatment. Not that a disposition to retaliate or revenge ourselves is consistent with the law of God. But perfect obedience to the law of God, does not imply that we should have no sense of injury or injustice, when we are abused. God has this, and ought to have it, and so does every moral being. To love your neighbor as yourself does not imply, that if he injure you, you feel no sense of the injury or injustice, but that you love him and would do him good, notwithstanding his injurious treatment.
- 5. It does not imply any degree of unhealthy excitement of mind. Rule 13 lays down the principal that moral law is to be so interpreted as to be consistent with physical law. God's laws certainly do not clash with each other. And the moral law cannot require such a state of constant mental excitement as will destroy the physical constitution. It cannot require any more mental excitement and action than is consistent with all the laws, attributes, and circumstances of both soul and body, as stated in rule 14.
- 6. It does not imply that any organ or faculty is to be at all times exerted to its full strength. This would soon exhaust and destroy any and every organ of the body. Whatever may be true of the mind, when separated from the body, it is certain, while it acts through a material organ, that a



constant state of excitement is impossible. When the mind is strongly excited, there is of necessity a great determination of blood to the brain. A high degree of excitement cannot long continue, certainly, without producing inflammation of the brain, and consequent insanity. And the law of God does not require any degree of emotion, or mental excitement, that is inconsistent with life and health. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not appear to have been in a state of continual excitement. When he and his disciples had been in a great excitement for a time, they would turn aside "and rest awhile."

Who, that has ever philosophized on this subject, does not know that the high degree of excitement which is sometimes witnessed in revivals of religion, must necessarily be short, or that the people must become deranged. It seems sometimes to be indispensable, that a high degree of excitement should prevail for a time, to arrest public and individual attention, and to draw people off from other pursuits, to attend to the concerns of their souls. But if any suppose that this high degree of excitement is either necessary, or desirable, or possible, to be long continued, they have not well considered the matter. And here is one grand mistake of the Church. They have supposed that the revival consists mostly in this state of excited emotion, rather than in conformity of the human will to the will of God. Hence, when the reasons for much excitement have ceased, and the public mind begins to grow more calm, they begin immediately to say that the revival is on the decline; when, in fact, with much less excited emotion, there may be vastly more real religion in the community.

Excitement is often important and indispensable. But the vigorous actings of the will are infinitely more important. And this state of mind may exist in the absence of highly excited emotions.

- 7. Nor does it imply that the same degree of emotion, volition, or intellectual effort, is at all times required. All volitions do not need the same strength. They cannot have equal strength, because they are not produced by equally powerful reasons. Should a man put forth as strong a volition to pick up an apple, as to extinguish the flames of a burning house? Should a mother, watching over her sleeping nursling, when all is quiet and secure, put forth as powerful volitions, as might be required to snatch it from the devouring flames? Now, suppose that she was equally devoted to God in watching her sleeping babe, and in rescuing it from the jaws of death. Her holiness would not consist in the fact that she exercised equally strong volitions, in both cases; but, that in both cases, the volition was equal to the accomplishment of the thing required to be done. So that persons may be entirely holy, and yet continually varying in the strength of their affections, according to their circumstances-- the state of their physical system-- and the business in which they are engaged.

All the powers of body and mind are to be held at the service and disposal of God. Just so much of physical, intellectual, and moral energy are to be expended in the performance of duty as the nature and the circumstances of the case require. And nothing is further from the truth, than that the law of God requires a constant, intense state of emotion and mental action on any and every subject alike.

- 8. Entire sanctification does not imply that God is to be at all times the direct object of attention

and affection. This is not only impossible in the nature of the case, but would render it impossible for us to think of or love our neighbor or ourselves: Rule 9.

Upon this subject in a former lecture, I used the following language. The law of God requires the supreme love of the heart. By this is meant, that the mind's supreme preference should be of God-- that God should be the great object of its supreme love and delight. But this state of mind is perfectly consistent with our engaging in any of the necessary business of life-- giving to that business that attention-- and exercising about it all those affections and emotions which its nature and importance demand.

If a man love God supremely, and engage in any business, for the promotion of his glory, if his eye be single, his affections and conduct are entirely holy, when necessarily engaged in the right transaction of his business, although for the time being, neither his thought or affection are upon God.

Just as a man who is supremely devoted to his family may be acting consistently with his supreme affection, and rendering them the most important and perfect service, while he does not think of them at all. As I have endeavored to show, in my lecture on the text, "Make to yourselves a new heart, and a new spirit," I consider the moral heart to be the mind's supreme preference. As I there stated, the natural, or fleshy heart, is the seat of animal life, and propels the blood through all the physical system. Now there is a striking analogy between this and the moral heart. And the analogy consists in this, that as the natural heart, by its pulsations diffuses life through the physical system; so the moral heart, or the supreme governing preference of the mind is that which gives life and character to man's moral actions; (e.g.,) suppose that I am engaged in teaching Mathematics. In this, the supreme desire of my mind is to glorify God, in this particular calling. Now in demonstrating some of its intricate propositions, I am obliged, for hours together, to give the entire attention of my mind to that object. Now, while my mind is thus intensely employed in this particular business, it is impossible that I should have any thoughts directly about God, or should exercise any direct affections, or emotions, or volitions towards him. Yet if, in this particular calling, all selfishness is excluded, and my supreme design is to glorify God, my mind is in a sanctified state, even though for the time being, I do not think of God.

It should be understood, that while the supreme preference of the mind has such efficiency, as to exclude all selfishness, and to call forth just that strength of volition, thought, affection, and emotion, that is requisite to the right discharge of any duty, to which the mind may be called, the heart is in a sanctified state. By a suitable degree of thought, and feeling, to the right discharge of duty, I mean just that intensity of thought, and energy of action, that the nature and importance of the particular duty to which, for the time being, I am called, demand.

In this statement, I take it for granted, that the brain, together with all the circumstances of the constitution are such, that the requisite amount of thought, feeling, &c. are possible. If the physical constitution, be in such a state of exhaustion as to be unable to put forth that amount of exertion which the nature of the subject might otherwise

demand, even in this case, the languid efforts, though far below the importance of the subject, would be all that the law of God requires. Whoever, therefore supposes that a state of entire sanctification, implies a state of entire abstraction of mind, from every thing but God, labors under a grievous mistake. Such a state of mind is as inconsistent with duty, as it is impossible, while we are in the flesh.

The fact is that the language and spirit of the law have been and generally are grossly misunderstood, and interpreted to mean what they never did, or can mean consistently with natural justice. Many a mind has been thrown open to the assaults of Satan, and kept in a state of continual bondage and condemnation, because God was not, at all times, the direct object of thought, affection, and emotion; and because the mind was not kept in a state of most perfect tension, and excited to the utmost at every moment.

- 9. Nor does it imply a state of continual calmness of mind. Christ was not in a state of continual calmness. The deep peace of his mind was never broken up, but the surface or emotions of his mind were often in a state of great excitement, and at other times in a state of great calmness. And here let me refer to Christ, as we have his history in the Bible, in illustration of the positions I have already taken, e.g. Christ had all the constitutional appetites and susceptibilities of human nature. Had it been otherwise, he could not have been "tempted in all points like as we are;" nor could he have been tempted in any point as we are, any further than he possessed a constitution similar to our own. Christ also manifested natural affection for his mother, and for other friends. He also showed that he had a sense of injury and injustice, and exercised a suitable resentment when he was injured and persecuted. He was not always in a state of great excitement. He appears to have had his seasons of excitement and of calm,-- of labor and rest,-- of joy and sorrow, like other good men. Some persons have spoken of entire sanctification as implying a state of uniform and universal calmness, and as if every kind and degree of excited feeling, except as the feelings of love to God are excited, were inconsistent with this state. But Christ often manifested a great degree of excitement when reproving the enemies of God. In short his history would lead to the conclusion that his calmness and excitement were various, according to the circumstances of the case. And although he was sometimes so pointed and severe in his reproof, as to be accused of being possessed of a devil, yet his emotions and feelings were only those that were called for and suited to the occasions.
- 10. Nor does it imply a state of continual sweetness of mind without any indignation or holy anger at sin or sinners. Anger at sin is only a modification of love. A feeling of justice, or a desire to have the wicked punished for the benefit of the government, is only another of the modifications of love. And such feelings are essential to the existence of love, where the circumstances call for their existence. It is said of Christ that he was angry. He often manifested anger and holy indignation. "God is angry with the wicked every day." And holiness, or a state of sanctification, instead of being inconsistent with, always implies the existence of anger, whenever circumstances occur, which demand its exercise: Rule 10.
- 11. It does not imply a state of mind that is all compassion, and no feeling of justice. Compassion is only one of the modifications of love. Justice, or a desire for the execution of law, and the punishment of sin is another of its modifications. God and Christ, and all holy beings, exercise all those affections and emotions that constitute the different modifications of

love, under every possible circumstance.

- 12. It does not imply that we should love or hate all men alike, irrespective of their value, circumstances, and relations. One being may have a greater capacity for happiness, and be of much more importance to the universe than another. Impartiality and the law of love require us not to regard all beings and things alike; but all beings and things according to their nature, relations and circumstances.
- 13. Nor does it imply a perfect knowledge of all our relations: rule 7. Now such an interpretation of the law, as would make it necessary, in order to yield obedience, for us to understand all our relations, would imply in us the possession of the attribute of omniscience; for certainly there is not a thing in the universe to which we do not sustain some relation. And a knowledge of all these relations, plainly implies infinite knowledge. It is plain that the law of God cannot require any such thing as this; and that entire sanctification or entire obedience to the law of God therefore implies no such thing.
- 14. Nor does it imply perfect knowledge on any subject. Perfect knowledge on any subject, implies a perfect knowledge of its nature, relations, bearings and tendencies. Now as every single thing in the universe sustains some relation to and has some bearing upon every other thing, there can be no such thing as perfect knowledge on any one subject, that does not embrace universal or infinite knowledge.
- 15. Nor does it imply freedom from mistake on any subject whatever. It is maintained by some that the grace of the gospel pledges to every man perfect knowledge, or at least such knowledge as to exempt him from any mistake. I cannot stop here to debate this question, but would merely say the law does not expressly or impliedly require infallibility of judgment in us. It only requires us to make the best use of all the light we have.
- 16. Nor does entire sanctification imply the knowledge of the exact relative value of different interests. I have already said in illustrating rule 7, that the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" does not imply that we should, in every instance, understand exactly the relative value and importance of every interest. This plainly cannot be required, unless it be assumed that we are omniscient.
- 17. It does not imply the same degree of knowledge that we might have possessed, had we always improved our time in its acquisition. The law cannot require us to love God or man as well as we might have been able to love them, had we always improved all our time in obtaining all the knowledge we could, in regard to their nature, character, and interests. If this were implied in the requisition of the law, there is not a saint on earth or in heaven that is or ever can be perfect. What is lost in this respect is lost, and past neglect can never be so atoned for as that we shall ever be able to make up in our acquisitions of knowledge, what we have lost. It will no doubt be true to all eternity, that we shall have less knowledge than we might have possessed, had we filled up all our time in its acquisition. We do not, cannot, nor shall we ever be able to love God as well as we might have loved him, had we always applied our minds to the acquisition of knowledge respecting him. And if entire sanctification is to be understood

as implying that we love God as much as we should, had we all the knowledge we might have had, then I repeat it, there is not a saint on earth or in heaven, nor ever will be, that is entirely sanctified.

- 18. It does not imply the same amount of service that we might have rendered, had we never sinned. The law of God does not imply or suppose that our powers are in a perfect state; that our strength of body or mind is what it would have been, had we never sinned. But it simply requires us to use what strength we have. The very wording of the law is proof conclusive, that it extends its demands only to the full amount of what strength we have. And this is true of every moral being, however great or small.
- 19. It does not require the same degree of love that we might have rendered, but for our ignorance. We certainly know much less of God, and therefore are much less capable of loving him, i.e. we are capable of loving him with a less amount, and to a less degree than if we knew more of him, which we might have done but for our sins. And as I have before said, this will be true to all eternity; for we can never make amends by any future obedience, or diligence for this any more than for other sins. And to all eternity, it will remain true, that we know less of God, and love him less than we might and should have done, had we always done our duty. If entire sanctification therefore, implies the same degree of love or service that might have been rendered, had we always developed our powers by a perfect use of them, then there is not a saint on earth or in heaven that is or ever will be in that state. The most perfect development and improvement of our powers, must depend upon the most perfect use of them. And every departure from their perfect use, is a diminishing of their highest development, and a curtailing of their capabilities to serve God in the highest and best manner. All sin then does just so much towards crippling and curtailing the powers of body and mind, and rendering them, by just so much, incapable of performing the service they might otherwise have rendered.

To this view of the subject it has been objected that Christ taught an opposite doctrine, in the case of the woman who washed his feet with her tears, when he said, "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." But can it be that Christ intended to be understood as teaching, that the more we sin the greater will be our love and our ultimate virtue? If this be so I do not see why it does not follow that the more sin in this life, the better, if so be that we are forgiven. If our virtue is really to be improved by our sins, I see not why it would not be good economy both for God and man, to sin as much as we can while in this world. Certainly Christ meant to lay down no such principle as this. He undoubtedly meant to teach, that a person who was truly sensible of the greatness of his sins, would exercise more of the love of gratitude, than would be exercised by one who had a less affecting sense of ill-desert.

- 20. Entire sanctification does not imply the same degree of faith that might have been exercised but for our ignorance and past sin.

We cannot believe any thing about God of which we have no evidence or knowledge. Our faith must therefore be limited by our intellectual perceptions of truth. The heathen are not under obligation to believe in Christ, and thousands of other things of which they have no knowledge. Perfection in a heathen would imply much less faith than in a

Christian. Perfection in an adult would imply much more and greater faith than in an infant. And perfection in an angel would imply much greater faith than in a man, just in proportion as he knows more of God than man. Let it be always understood that entire sanctification never implies that which is naturally impossible. It is certainly naturally impossible for us to believe that of which we have no knowledge. Entire sanctification implies in this respect nothing more than the heart's faith or confidence in all the truth that is perceived by the intellect.

- 21. Nor does it imply the conversion of all men in answer to our prayers. It has been maintained by some that a state of entire sanctification implies the offering of prevailing prayer for the conversion of all men. To this I reply,
  - (1.) Then Christ was not sanctified; for he offered no such prayer.
  - (2.) The law of God makes no such demand either expressly or impliedly.
  - (3.) We have no right to believe that all men will be converted in answer to our prayers, unless we have an express promise to that effect.
  - (4.) As therefore there is no such promise, we are under no obligation to offer such prayer. Nor does the non-conversion of the world, imply that there are no sanctified saints in the world.
- 22. It does not imply the conversion of any one for whom there is not an express or implied promise in the word of God. The fact that Judas was not converted in answer to Christ's prayers, does not prove that Christ was not in a state of entire sanctification.
- 23. Nor does it imply that all those things which are expressly or impliedly promised, will be granted in answer to our prayers, or in other words, that we should pray in faith for them, if we are ignorant of the existence or application of those promises. A state of perfect love implies the discharge of all known duty. And nothing strictly speaking can be duty of which the mind has no knowledge. It cannot therefore be our duty to believe a promise of which we are entirely ignorant, or the application of which to any specific object we do not understand.

If there is sin in such a case as this, it lies in the ignorance itself. And here no doubt, there often is sin, because there is present neglect to know the truth. But it should always be understood that the sin lies in the ignorance, and not in the neglect of that of which we have no knowledge. A state of sanctification is inconsistent with any present neglect to know the truth; for such neglect is sin. But it is not inconsistent with our failing to do that of which we have no knowledge. James says: "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "If ye were blind," says Christ, "ye should have no sin, but because ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth."

- 24. Entire sanctification does not imply the impossibility of future sin. Entire and permanent sanctification does imply the fact, that the sanctified soul will not sin. But the only reason why he will not, is to be ascribed entirely to the sovereign grace of God. Sanctification does not

imply, as I have already said, any such change in the nature of the subject, as to render it impossible or improbable that he will again sin. Nay, I do not suppose there is a man upon earth, or perhaps in heaven, who would not fall into sin but for the supporting grace of God.

- 25. It does not imply that watchfulness, and prayer, and effort, are no longer needed. It is the height of absurdity to suppose that, either in this or any other state of being, there will be no faith called for, or watchfulness against temptation. Just so long as the susceptibilities of our soul exist, temptation in some sense and to some extent must exist, in whatever world we are. Christ manifestly struggled hard with temptation. He found watchfulness and the most powerful opposition to temptation, indispensable to his perseverance in holiness. "Is the servant above his master, or the disciple above his Lord?"
- 26. Nor does it imply that we are no longer dependent on the grace of Christ, but the exact opposite is implied. A state of entire and permanent sanctification implies the most constant and perfect dependence upon the grace and strength of an indwelling Christ. It seems to have been supposed by some that entire sanctification implies that something has been done which has so changed the nature of the sanctified soul, that ever after he will persevere in holiness in his own strength. I suppose this to be as far as possible from the truth, and that no change whatever has occurred in the nature of the individual, but simply that he has learned to confide in Christ at every step. He has so received Christ's strength as to lean constantly upon his supporting grace.
- 27. Nor does it imply that the Christian warfare is ended. I understand the Christian warfare to consist in the mind's conflict with temptation. This certainly will never end in this life.
- 28. Nor does it imply that there is no more growth in grace. Many persons seem to understand the command "grow in grace," as implying the gradual giving up of sin. They suppose that when persons have done sinning, there is no more room for growth in grace. Now it is said of Christ that he grew in grace, where the same original word is used as in the command. "He increased in stature and in wisdom, and in favor (kariti, grace) with God and man." If growth in grace implies the gradual giving up of sin, then God has commanded men not to give up their sins at once. They must give them up gradually. The truth is that growth in grace implies the relinquishment of sin to begin with. To grow in grace is to grow in the favor of God. And what would the Apostle have said, had he supposed that the requirement to grow in grace, would have been understood by an orthodox Church to require only the gradual relinquishment of their sins? I suppose that saints will continue to grow in grace to all eternity, and in the knowledge of God. But this does not imply that they are not entirely holy, when they enter heaven, or before.
- 29. Nor does it imply that others will recognize it to be real sanctification. With the present views of the Church in regard to what is implied in entire sanctification, it is impossible that a really sanctified soul should be acknowledged by the Church as such. And with these views of the Church, there is no doubt but sanctified believers would be set at nought, and denounced by the great mass of Christians as possessing any other than a sanctified spirit.

It was insisted, and positively believed by the Jews, that Jesus Christ was possessed of a wicked, instead of a holy spirit. Such were their notions of holiness, that they no doubt supposed him to be actuated by any other than the Spirit of God. They especially

supposed so on account of his opposition to the current orthodoxy, and the ungodliness of the religious teachers of the day. Now, who does not see that when the Church is in a great measure conformed to the world, that a spirit of holiness in any man, would certainly lead him to aim the sharpest rebukes at the spirit and life of those in this state, whether in high or low places. And who does not see that this would naturally result in his being accused of possessing a wicked spirit?

The most violent opposition that I have ever seen manifested to any persons in my life, has been manifested by members of the Church, and even by some ministers of the gospel, towards those whom I believe were among the most holy persons I ever knew. I have been shocked, and wounded beyond expression, at the almost fiendish opposition to such persons, that I have witnessed. I have several times of late observed that writers in newspapers were calling for examples of Christian Perfection or entire sanctification. Now I would humbly inquire, of what use it is to point the Church to examples, so long as they do not know what is, and what is not implied in a state of entire sanctification? I would ask, are the Church agreed among themselves in regard to what constitutes this state? Are any considerable number of ministers agreed among themselves as to what is implied in a state of entire sanctification? Now does not everybody know that the Church and the ministry are in a great measure in the dark upon this subject? Why then call for examples? No man can possess this state without being sure to be set at nought as a hypocrite, and a self-deceiver.

- 30. It is not implied in this state that the sanctified soul will himself always at the time be sure that his feelings and conduct are perfectly right. Cases may occur in which he may be in doubt in regard to the rule of duty; and be at a loss, without examination, reflection, and prayer, to know whether in a particular case he has done and felt exactly right. If he were sure that he understood the exact application of the law of God to that particular case, his consciousness would invariably inform him whether or not he was conformed to that rule. But in any and every case where he has not a clear apprehension of the rule, it may require time and thought, and prayer, and diligent inquiry to satisfy his mind in regard to the exact moral quality of any particular act or state of feeling; e.g. A man may feel himself exercised with strong indignation in view of sin. And he may be brought into doubt whether the indignation, in kind or degree, was not sinful. It may therefore require self-examination and deep searching of heart to decide this question. That all indignation is not sinful is certain. And that a certain kind and degree of indignation at sin is a duty, is also certain. But our most holy exercises may lay us open to the assaults of Satan. And he may so turn our accuser as for a time to render it difficult for us to decide in regard to the real state of our hearts. And thus a sanctified soul may be "in heaviness through manifold temptations."
- 31. Nor does it imply the same strength of holy affection that Adam may have exercised before he fell, and his powers were debilitated by sin. It should never be forgotten that the mind in this state of existence, is wholly dependent upon the brain and physical system for its development. In Adam, and in any of his posterity, any violation of the physical laws of the body, resulting in the debility and imperfection of any organ or system of organs, must necessarily impair the vigor of the mind, and prevent its developing itself as it otherwise might have done. It is therefore entirely erroneous to say that mankind are or can be, in this state of existence, perfect



in as high a sense as they might have been had sin never entered the world, and had there been no such thing as a violation of the laws of the physical constitution. The law of God requires only the entire consecration of such powers as we have. As these powers improve our obligation is enlarged, and will continue to be to all eternity. For myself, I have very little doubt that the human constitution is capable of being very nearly, if not entirely renovated or recovered from the evils of intemperance, by a right understanding of, and an adherence to the laws of life and health. So that after a few generations the human body would be nearly if not entirely restored to its primitive physical perfection. If this is so, the time may come when obedience to the law of God, will imply as great strength and constancy of affection as Adam was capable of exercising before the fall. But if on the other hand, it be true that any injury of the physical constitution can never be wholly repaired-- that the evils of sin in respect to its effect upon the body, are, in some measure at least, to descend with men to the end of time, then no such thing is implied in a state of entire sanctification, as the same strength and permanency of holy affection in us that Adam might have exercised before the fall.

- 32. Nor does it imply the formation of such holy habits as shall secure obedience. Some have said that it was absurd to profess a state of entire sanctification, on the ground that it implies not only obedience to the law of God, but such a formation and perfection of holy habits as to render it certain that we shall never again sin. And that a man can no more tell when he is entirely sanctified, than he can tell how many holy acts it will take to form holy habits of such strength that he will never again sin. To this I answer,
  - (1.) The law of God has nothing to do with requiring this formation of holy habits. It is satisfied with present obedience. It only demands at the present moment the full devotion of all our powers to God. It never in any instance complains that we have not formed such holy habits as to render it certain that we shall sin no more.
  - (2.) If it be true that a man is never wholly sanctified until his holy habits are so fixed as to render it certain that he will never sin again, then Adam was not in a state of entire sanctification previously to the fall, nor were the angels in this state before their fall.
  - (3.) If this sentiment be true, there is not a saint nor an angel in heaven so far as we can know, that can with the least propriety profess entire sanctification; for how do they know that they have performed so many holy acts as to have created such habits of holiness as to render it certain that they will never more sin?
  - (4.) Entire sanctification does not consist in the formation of holy habits, nor at all depend upon this. Both entire and permanent sanctification are based alone upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ. And perseverance in holiness is to be ascribed alone to the influence of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, instead of being secured by any habits of holiness which we have or ever shall form.
- 33. Nor does it imply exemption from sorrow or mental suffering.

It was not so with Christ. Nor is it inconsistent with our sorrowing for our own past sins, and sorrowing that we have not now the health and vigor, and knowledge, and love, that

we might have had, if we had sinned less; or sorrow for those around us-- sorrow in view of human sinfulness, or suffering. These are all consistent with a state of entire sanctification, and indeed are the natural results of it.

- 34. Nor is it inconsistent with our living in human society-- with mingling in the scenes, and engaging in the affairs of this world. Some have supposed that to be holy we must withdraw from the world. Hence the absurd and ridiculous notions of papists in retiring to monasteries, and convents-- in taking the veil, and as they say, retiring to a life of devotion. Now I suppose this state of voluntary exclusion from human society, to be utterly inconsistent with any degree of holiness, and a manifest violation of the law of love to our neighbor.
- 35. Nor does it imply moroseness of temper and manners. Nothing is farther from the truth than this. It is said of Xavier, than whom, perhaps, few holier men have ever lived, that "he was so cheerful as often to be accused of being gay." Cheerfulness is certainly the result of holy affections-- and sanctification no more implies moroseness in this world than it does in heaven.

Before I proceed to the next head of my discourse, (having said these things, and given these rules of interpretation so that you can apply the principle to many things I have not time to notice) I wish to make the following remark.

In all the discussions I have seen upon this subject, while it seems to be admitted that the law of God is the standard of perfection, yet in defining what constitutes Christian perfection or entire sanctification, men entirely lose sight of this standard, and seldom or never raise the distinct inquiry; what does obedience to this law imply, and what does it not imply. Instead of bringing every thing to this test, they seem to lose sight of it. On the one hand they bring in things that never were required by the law of God of man in his present state. Thus they lay a stumbling block and a snare for the saints, to keep them in perpetual bondage, supposing that this is the way to keep them humble, to place the standard entirely above their reach. Or, on the other hand, they really abrogate the law, so as to make it no longer binding. Or they so fritter away what is really implied in it, as to leave nothing in its requirements, but a kind of sickly, whimsical, inefficient sentimentalism, or perfectionism, which in its manifestations and results, appears to me to be any thing else than that which the law of God requires.

## LECTURE II.

January 15, 1840

### **SANCTIFICATION- No. 2**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

I come now to show,

#### **IV. What is implied in entire Sanctification.**

Under this head, I shall refer to and repeat some things (as I have already done) which I said a number of months since in my lectures on the law of God.

- 1. Love is the sum of all that is implied in entire Sanctification. But I may and should be asked what is the kind of love implied? I shall consider the kind of love to be exercised towards God.
  - (1.) It is to be love of the heart, and not a mere emotion. By the heart I mean the will. Emotions, or what are generally termed feelings, are always involuntary states of mind, and no further than they are indirectly under the control of the will, have they any moral character; i.e. they are not choices or volitions, and of course do not govern the conduct. Love, in the form of an emotion, may exist in opposition to the will; e.g. we may exercise emotions of love contrary to our conscience and judgment, and in opposition to our will. Thus the sexes often exercise emotions of love towards those to whom all the voluntary powers of their mind feel opposed, and with whom they will not associate. It is true, that in most cases, the emotions are with the will. But they are sometimes, nay often opposed to it.

Now, it is a voluntary state of mind that the law of God requires; i.e. it lays its claims upon the will. The will controls the conduct. And it is, therefore, of course, the love of the heart or will that God requires.
  - (2.) Benevolence is one of the modifications of love which we are to exercise towards God. Benevolence is good will. And certainly we are bound to exercise this kind of love to God. It is a dictate of reason, of conscience, of common sense, and of immutable justice, that we should exercise good and not ill-will to God. It matters not whether he needs our good will or whether our good or ill-will can in any way affect him-- the question does not respect his necessities, but deserts.
  - (3.) Another modification of this love, is that of complacency or esteem. God's character is infinitely good. We are therefore bound, not merely to love him, with the love of benevolence; but to exercise the highest degree of complacency in his character. To say that God is good and lovely is merely to say that he deserves to be loved. If he deserves to be loved, on account of his goodness and love, then he deserves to be loved in proportion to his goodness and loveliness. Our obligation, therefore is infinitely great to exercise toward him the highest degree of the love of complacency of which we are capable. These remarks are confirmed by the Bible, by reason, by conscience and by common sense.
  - (4.) Another modification of this love is that of gratitude. As every moral being is constantly receiving favors from God, it is self-evident that love in the form of gratitude is universally obligatory.

- (5.) Another peculiarity of this love which must, by no means, be overlooked, is that it must be disinterested; i.e. that we should not love him for selfish reasons. But that we should love him for what he is-- with benevolence; because his well-being is an infinite good-- with complacency; because his character is infinitely excellent-- with the heart; because all virtue belongs to the heart. It is plain, that nothing short of disinterested love is virtue. The Savior recognizes and settles this truth, in Luke 6:32-34: "For if ye love them who love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." These words epitomize the whole doctrine of the Bible on this subject, and lay down the broad principle, that to love God, or any one else, for selfish reasons, is not virtue.
- (6.) Another peculiarity of this love is that it must be in every instance supreme. Any thing less than supreme love to God, must be idolatry. If any thing else is loved more, that is our God.

I have been surprised to learn that some understand the term supreme in a comparative sense, and not in a superlative sense. They suppose therefore that the law of God requires more than supreme love. Webster's definition of supreme and supremely is "in the highest degree," "to the utmost extent." I understand the law to require as high a state of devotion to God, of love and actual service as the powers of body and mind are capable of sustaining.

Observe, that God lays great stress upon the degree of love. So that the degree is essential to the kind of love. If it be not supreme in degree it is wholly defective and in no sense acceptable to God.

I will now consider the kind of love to be exercised towards our fellow men.

- (1.) It must be the love of the heart, and not mere desire or emotion. It is very natural to desire the good of others-- to pity the distressed-- and to feel strong emotions of compassion towards those who are afflicted. But these emotions are not virtue. Unless we will their good, as well as desire it, it is of no avail. James 2:15, 16: "If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled;' notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

Now here the Apostle fully recognized the principle, that mere desire for the good of others, which of course will satisfy itself with good words instead of good deeds, is not virtue. If it were good willing, instead of good desiring, it would produce corresponding actions; and unless it is good willing, there is no holiness in it.

- (2.) Benevolence to men is a prime modification of holy love. This is included in what I

have said above, but needs to be expressly stated and explained. It is a plain dictate of reason, of conscience, of common sense, and immutable justice, that we should exercise good will towards our fellow men-- that we should will their good, in proportion to its relative importance-- that we should rejoice in their happiness, and endeavor to promote it, according to its relative value in the scale of being.

- (3.) Complacency towards those that are virtuous is another modification of holy love. I say towards those that are virtuous, because while we exercise benevolence towards all, irrespective of their character, we have a right to exercise complacency towards those only who are holy, To exercise complacency towards the wicked is to be as wicked as they are. But to exercise complacency in those that are holy, is to be ourselves holy.
- (4.) This love is to be in every instance equal. By equal I do not mean that degree of love which selfish beings have for themselves; for this is supreme. There is a grand distinction between self-love and selfishness. Self-love is that benevolence to self or regard for our own interest, which its intrinsic importance demands. Selfishness is the excess of self-love: i.e. it is supreme self-love-- it is making our own happiness the supreme object of pursuit, because it is our own. And not attaching that importance to other's interests, and the happiness of other beings, which their relative value demands. A selfish mind is therefore in the exercise of the supreme love of self.

Now the law of God does not require or permit us to love our neighbor with this degree of love, for that would be idolatry. But the command, "to love our neighbor as ourselves," implies

- (a) That we should love ourselves less than supremely, and attach no more importance to our own interests and happiness than their relative value demands-- so that the first thing implied in this command is that we love ourselves less than supremely, and that we love our neighbor with the same degree of love which it is lawful for us to exercise towards ourselves.
- (b) Equal love does not imply that we should neglect our own appropriate concerns, and attend to the affairs of others. God has appointed to every man a particular sphere in which to act, and particular affairs to which he must attend. And this business, whatever it is, must be transacted for God and not for ourselves. For a man, therefore, to neglect his particular calling under the pretence of attending to the business of others, is neither required or permitted by this law.

Nor are we to neglect our own families, and the nurture and education of our children, and attend to that of others. "But if any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." To these duties we are to attend for God. And no man or woman is required or permitted to neglect the children God has given them, under the pretence of attending to the families of others.

Nor does this law require or permit us to squander our possessions upon the

intemperate, and dissolute, and improvident. Not that the absolute necessities of such persons are in no case to be relieved by us, but it is always to be done in such a manner as not to encourage, but to rebuke their evil courses.

Nor does this law require or permit us to suffer others to live by sponging out of our possessions, while they themselves are not engaged in promoting the good of men.

Nor does it require or permit us to lend money to speculators, or for speculating purposes, or in any way to encourage selfishness.

- (c) But by equal love is meant, as I have said, the same love in kind and degree, which it is lawful for us to exercise towards ourselves. It is lawful, nay, it is our duty to exercise a suitable regard to our own happiness. This is benevolence to self, or what is commonly called self-love. The same, both in kind and degree, we are required to exercise to all our fellow men.
- (5.) Another feature of holy love is that it must be impartial; i.e. it must extend to enemies as well as friends. Else it is selfish love, and comes under the reprobation of the Savior, in the passage before quoted, Luke 6:32-34: "For if ye love them who love you what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same," &c.

Now observe that this test must always be applied to the kind of love we exercise to our fellow men, in order to understand its genuineness-- God's love is love to enemies. It was for his enemies that he gave his Son. Our love must be the same in kind-- it must extend to enemies, as well as friends. And if it does not, it is partial and selfish.

- 2. Entire Sanctification implies, entire conformity of heart and life to all the known will of God however it may be made known-- to both physical and moral law so far as they are known.
- 3. It implies such a perfect confidence in him as to be willing that all events should be at his sovereign disposal-- such a confidence as to preclude all carefulness and undue anxiety about ourselves or our friends, our temporal or eternal interests, the interests of the Church or of the world. Let me be understood. I am as far as possible from supposing a state of entire Sanctification is inconsistent with the greatest desire, and most earnest and prevailing wrestlings with God for blessings, both spiritual and temporal upon ourselves and the world. But I suppose that a soul in a state of entire conformity to the will of God, will never so distrust his providence and grace as to be thrown into a state of feverish anxiety about any event. It will, on all occasions, most sweetly acquiesce and rejoice in the will of God, in whatever way that will is revealed.
- 4. Entire Sanctification implies a supreme disposition to glorify and serve God-- that this is the ruling principle of our life-- that we live for no lower or other end than this-- that all other things that we desire are esteemed as a means to this end-- that life and health, and food and raiment, and houses and furniture, and every thing else that we possess are regarded by us as a means to this one great absorbing end, the Glory of God.

- 5. It implies that the principle of love should have such energy as to control every design and action directly or indirectly.
- 6. It implies an abiding sense of the presence of God. From what I have already said, you will understand me of course not to mean that God is the direct object of thought, attention and affection, but that there should be such a sense of his presence at all times as to have an important bearing upon our whole lives. Every one knows by his own experience, what it is to have a kind of sense of the presence of a person, who is not at the time the direct object of our thoughts. A man in the presence of an earthly prince, or of an august court, under the eye of a human judge, would be continually awed, and restrained, and affected with a kind of sense of where he was, and in whose presence, and under whose eye he was acting although his mind might be so intensely employed in the transaction of business as not at all to make the judge or prince the object of direct thought, attention, or affection. In this sense, I suppose a sanctified soul will have an abiding sense, at all times and places, of the presence of God. And when the mind is withdrawn from necessary pursuits, it will naturally return to God, and be sensible of His presence in a vastly higher sense than this. It will be so impressed, and melted, and affected, by His presence as can never be expressed in words, but as a matter of experience is familiar to all those who walk with God.
- 7. It does imply deep and uninterrupted communion with God. But here let me correct a mistake into which, as I think, some have fallen. Many seem to recognize nothing as communion with God expect that sweet peace and joy, and flowing, and glowing love that the soul often experiences in seasons of communion. But God no doubt often has seasons of intercourse and communion with the soul and with the sanctified soul, in which he reminds it of past sins and follies. And in order to keep it in a sanctified state he gives it such a view or its past history as to fill it with unutterable shame, and self-abhorrence, and contempt. Now persons are apt to conceive of this state of mind as a state of darkness, & to conceive of themselves as being under the hidings of God's countenance, when in fact they are never perhaps more thoroughly in the light than at such seasons. They are never perhaps nearer to God than on such occasions. To be sure their thoughts are not occupied with those sweet and heavenly visions that fill the mind with joy. Yet they are occupied with considerations of no less importance and no less indispensable to continuing them in a state of holiness, than those sweet truths which at other times so greatly rejoice them.
- 8. It implies a greater dread of offending God than of any other evil. This is implied in supreme love. It is a contradiction to say that we love God supremely, and yet do not dread offending Him so much as we dread some other evil. If we love Him more than any earthly friend, we shall dread to offend Him more than that friend. If we love Him more than we do ourselves, we should dread offending Him more than we do that evil should befall ourselves. If he is dearer to us than our own souls we should dread remaining in sin more than we should dread the loss of our souls.
- 9. It does imply the subjugation of all our appetites and passions to the will of God. I have already said that the sin of Adam consisted in preferring the gratification of his appetites to the

will of God. This is the sin of all men. This is the substance and the history of selfishness. Now entire obedience to the law of God does imply that no appetite or susceptibility of body or mind shall be gratified in opposition to the known will of God. But on the other hand, that "the whole body, soul and spirit" shall be held in a state of entire consecration to God.

- 10. It implies the strictest employment of our time in the acquisition of knowledge, and a consecration of what we already know to the service of God.

In my last lecture, I said that the legal maxim, "Ignorance of the law excuses no one," is true in morals to but a limited extent, and that actual knowledge is indispensable to obligation under the government of God. This I think was sufficiently proven by a reference to scripture testimony. I also said that in sins of ignorance, the sin consisted in the ignorance itself, and not in the non-performance of that of which the mind has no knowledge.

Now to avoid mistake, it is important to remark here that ignorance of our duty is always a sin where we possess the means and opportunities of information. In such cases, the guilt of the ignorance is equal to all the default of which it is the occasion. Strictly speaking the duty to do a thing does not and cannot attach until the mind has a knowledge of that thing. Yet if the means of knowledge are within reach of the mind, the guilt is just as great as all the default of which this ignorance is the occasion. So that courts of law do not inflict injustice in holding all the subjects of a government responsible for knowing the law, where the means of knowledge are within their reach. Although they are not in form pronounced guilty for their ignorance, & punished for the specific offence, but on the contrary are held responsible for breaches of those laws of which they had no knowledge, yet in fact no injustice is done them, as their ignorance in such cases really deserves the punishment inflicted.

To this it may be objected that God, under the old dispensation treated sins of ignorance as involving less guilt than sins committed against knowledge. To this I reply,

He did so. And the reason is very obvious. The people possessed but very limited means of information. Copies of the law were very scarce and utterly inaccessible to the great mass of the people. So that while He held them sufficiently responsible to engage their memories to retain a knowledge of their duty and to search it out with all diligence, yet it is plain that He held them responsible in a vastly lower sense than He does those who have higher means of information. The responsibility of the heathen was less than that of the Jews-- that of the Jews less than that of Christians-- and that of Christians in the early ages of the Church, before the canon of scripture was full and copies multiplied, much less than that of Christians at the present day.

- 11. It implies the complete annihilation of selfishness under all its forms, and a practical and hearty recognition of the rights and interests of our neighbor. Let me point out in a few particulars what the law of God prohibits and what it requires in these particulars, as stated in a former lecture.



- (1.) It prohibits all supreme self-love, or selfishness. The command, "love thy neighbor as thyself," implies, not that we should love our neighbor supremely, as selfish men love themselves; but that we should love ourselves, in the first place, and pursue our happiness, only according to its real value, in the scale of being. But I need not dwell upon this; as it will not probably be doubted, that this precept prohibits supreme self-love.
- (2.) It prohibits all excessive self-love: (i.e.) every degree of love, that is disproportioned to the relative value of our own happiness.
- (3.) It prohibits the laying any practical stress upon any interest, because it is our own.
- (4.) It prohibits, of course, every degree of ill will, and all those feelings that are necessarily connected with selfishness.
- (5.) It prohibits apathy and indifference, with regard to the well being of our fellow men. But;
- (6.) It requires the practical recognition of the fact, that all men are brethren-- that God is the great Parent-- the great Father of the universe-- that all moral agents, every where , are his children-- and that he is interested in the happiness of every individual, according to its relative importance. He is no respecter of persons. But so far as the love of Benevolence is concerned, He loves all moral beings, in proportion to their capacity of receiving, and doing good. Now the law of God evidently takes all this for granted; and that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth."
- (7.) It requires that every being, and interest should be regarded and treated, by us, according to their relative value; (i.e.) that we should recognize God's relation to the universe-- and our relation to each other-- and treat all men as our brethren-- as having an inalienable title to our good will, and kind offices-- as citizens of the same government-- and members of the great family of God.
- (8.) It requires us to exercise as tender a regard to our neighbor's reputation, interest, and well-being, in all respects, as to our own-- to be as unwilling to mention his faults, as to have our own mentioned-- to hear him slandered as to be slandered ourselves. In short, he is to be esteemed, by us, as our brother.
- (9.) It justly reprobates any violation of the great principle of equal love, as rebellion against the whole universe. It is rebellion against God, because it is a rejection of his authority-- and selfishness, under any form, is a setting up of our own interests, in opposition to the interests of the universe of God.
- 12. Entire Sanctification implies a willingness to exercise self-denial, even unto death, for the glory of God and good of man, did they require it. The Apostle teaches us that "we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren," as Christ laid down his life.

## LECTURE III.

January 29, 1840

### **SANCTIFICATION- No. 3**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

We have now arrived at a very important point in the discussion of this subject, and I beg your patient attention. Having shown,

- 1. What I mean by the term sanctification;*
- 2. What entire sanctification is;*
- 3. The difference between entire and permanent sanctification;*
- 4. What is not implied, and*
- 5. What is implied in entire sanctification;*

I am next, according to my plan to show,

### **VI. That entire sanctification is attainable in this life.**

- 1. It is self-evident that entire obedience to God's law is possible on the ground of natural ability. To deny this is to deny that a man is able to do as well as he can. The very language of the law is such as to level its claims to the capacity of the subject, however great or small that capacity may be. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Here then it is plain, that all the law demands, is the exercise of whatever strength we have, in the service of God. Now, as entire sanctification consists in perfect obedience to the law of God, and as the law requires nothing more than the right use of whatever strength we have, it is of course, forever settled that a state of entire and permanent sanctification is attainable in this life on the ground of natural ability.
- 2. The provisions of grace are such as to render its actual attainment in this life, the object of reasonable pursuit. It is admitted that the entire and permanent sanctification of the church is to be accomplished. It is also admitted that this work is to be accomplished "through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth." It is also universally agreed that this work must be begun here; and also that it must be completed before the soul can enter heaven. This

then is the inquiry, Is this state attainable as a matter of fact before death; and if so when, in this life, may we expect to attain it? It is easy to see that this question can be settled only by a reference to the word of God. And here it is of fundamental importance that we understand the rules by which scripture declarations and promises are to be interpreted. I have already given several rules in the light of which we have endeavored to interpret the meaning of the law. I will now state several plain common sense rules by which the promises are to be interpreted. The question in regard to the rules of biblical interpretation is fundamental to all religious inquiry. Until the church are agreed to interpret the scriptures in accordance with certain fixed and undeniable principles, they can never be agreed in regard to what the Bible teaches. I have often been amazed at the total disregard of all sober rules of biblical interpretation. On the one hand the threatenings, and on the other the promises, are either thrown away or made to mean something entirely different from that which was intended by the Spirit of God. I have much to say on this subject, and design, the Lord willing, to make the rules of biblical interpretation the subject of distinct inquiry at another time. At present, I will only mention a few plain, common sense, and self-evident rules for the interpretation of the promises. In the light of these, we may be able to settle the inquiry before us, viz: whether the provisions of grace are such as to render entire and permanent sanctification, in this life, an object of reasonable pursuit.

- (1.) The language of a promise is to be interpreted by a reference to the known character of him who promises, where this character is revealed and made known in other ways than by the promise itself, e.g.
  - (a) If the promisor is known to be of a very bountiful disposition, or the opposite of this, these considerations should be taken into the account in interpreting the language of his promise. If he is of a very bountiful disposition, he may be expected to mean all that he seems to mean in the language of his promise, and a very liberal construction should be put upon his language. But if his character is known to be the opposite of bountifulness, and that whatever he promised would be given with great reluctance, his language should be construed strictly.
  - (b) His character for hyperbole and extravagance in the use of language should be taken into the account in interpreting the promises. If it be well understood that the promisor is in the habit of using extravagant language--to say much more than he means, this circumstance should in all justice be taken into the account in the interpretation of the language of his promises. But on the other hand, if he be known to be an individual of great candor, and to use language with great circumspection and propriety, we may freely understand him to mean what he says. His promise may be in figurative language and not to be understood literally, but in this case even, he must be understood to mean what the figure naturally and fully implies.
  - (c) The fact should be taken into the account, whether the promise was made deliberately or in circumstances of great but temporary excitement. If the promise was made deliberately, it should be interpreted to mean what it says. But if it were made under great but temporary excitement, much allowance is to be made for the

state of mind, which led to the use of such strong language.

- (2.) The relation of the parties to each other should be duly considered in the interpretation of the language of a promise; e.g. the promise of a father to a son admits of a more liberal and full construction than if the promise were made to a stranger, as the father may be supposed to indulge a more liberal and bountiful disposition towards a son than towards a person in whom he has no particular interest.
- (3.) The design of the promisor in relation to the necessities of the promisee or person to whom the promise is made, should be taken into the account. If it be manifest that the design of the promisor was to meet the necessities of the promisee, then his promise must be so understood as to meet these necessities.
- (4.) If it be manifest that the design of the promisor was to meet the necessities of the promisee, then the extent of these necessities should be taken into the account in the interpretation of the promise.
- (5.) The interest of the promisor in the accomplishment of his design, or in fully meeting and relieving the necessities of the promisee, should be taken into the account. If there is the most satisfactory proof aside from that which is contained in the promise itself, that the promisor feels the highest interest in the promisee, and in fully meeting and relieving his necessities, then his promise must be understood accordingly.
- (6.) If it is known that the promisor has exercised the greatest self-denial and made the greatest sacrifice for the promisee, in order to render it proper or possible for him to make and fulfill his promises, in relation to the relieving his necessities, the state of mind implied in this conduct, should be fully recognized in interpreting the language of the promise. It would be utterly unreasonable and absurd in such a case to restrict and pare down the language of his promise so as to make it fall entirely short of what might reasonably be expected of the promisor, from those developments of his character, feelings, and designs, which were made by the great self-denial he has exercised and the sacrifices he has made.
- (7.) The bearing of the promise upon the interests of the promisor should also be taken into the account. It is a general and correct rule of interpretation, that when the thing promised has an injurious bearing upon the interest of the promisor and is something which he cannot well afford to do, and might therefore be supposed to promise with reluctance, the language in such a case is to be strictly construed. No more is to be understood by it than the strictest construction will demand.
- (8.) But if on the other hand the thing promised will not impoverish or in any way be inimical to the interests of the promisor, no such construction is to be resorted to.
- (9.) Where the thing promised is that which the promisor has the greatest delight in doing or bestowing; and where he accounts it "more blessed to give than to receive;" and where

it is well known by other revelations of his character, and by his own express and often repeated declarations, that he has the highest satisfaction and finds his own happiness in bestowing favors upon the promisee, in this case the most liberal construction should be put upon the promise, and he is to be understood to mean all that he says.

- (10.) The resources and ability of the promisor to meet the necessities of the promisee, without injury to himself, are to be considered. If a physician should promise to restore a patient to perfect health, it might be unfair to understand him as meaning all that he says. If he so far restored the patient as that he recovered in a great measure from his disease, it might be reasonable to suppose that this was all he really intended, as the known inability of a physician to restore an individual to perfect health might reasonably modify our understanding of the language of his promise. But when there can be no doubt as to the ability, resources, and willingness of the physician to restore his patient to perfect health, then we are, in all reason and justice, required to believe he means all that he says. If God should promise to restore a man to perfect health who was diseased, there can be no doubt that his promise should be understood to mean what its language imports.
- (11.) When commands and promises are given by one person to another, in the same language, in both cases it is to be understood alike, unless there is some manifest reason to the contrary.
- (12.) If neither the language, connection, nor circumstances, demand a diverse interpretation, we are bound to understand the same language alike in both cases.
- (13.) I have said, we are to interpret the language of law so as to consist with natural justice. I now say, that we are to interpret the language of the promises so as to consist with the known greatness, resources, goodness, bountifulness, relations, design, happiness, and glory of the promisor.
- (14.) If his bountifulness is equal to his justice, his promises of grace must be understood to mean as much as the requirements of his justice.
- (15.) If he delights in giving as much as in receiving, his promises must mean as much as the language of his requirements.
- (16.) If he is as merciful as he is just, his promises of mercy must be as liberally construed as the requirements of his justice.
- (17.) If "he delighteth in mercy," if Himself says "judgment is his strange work," and mercy is that in which he has peculiar satisfaction, his promises of grace and mercy are to be construed even more liberally than the command and threatenings of his justice. The language in this case is to be understood as meaning quite as much as the same language would in any supposable circumstances.
- (18.) Another rule of interpreting and applying the promises which has been extensively

overlooked is this, the promises are all "yes and amen in Christ Jesus." They are all founded upon and expressive of great and immutable principles of God's government. God is no respecter of persons. He knows nothing of favoritism. But when He makes a promise, He reveals a principle of universal application to all persons in like circumstances. Therefore the promises are not restricted in their application to the individual or individuals to whom they were first given, but may be claimed by all persons in similar circumstances. And what God is at one time, He always is. What He has promised at one time or to one person, he promises at all times to all persons under similar circumstances. That this is a correct view of the subject is manifest from the manner in which the New Testament writers understood and applied the promises of the Old Testament. Let any person with a reference Bible read the New Testament with a design to understand how its writers applied the promises of the Old Testament, and he will see this principle brought out in all its fulness. The promises made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, the Patriarchs, and to the inspired men of every age, together with the promises made to the church, and indeed all the promises of spiritual blessings,--it is true of them all, that what God has said and promised once, He always says and promises, to all persons and at all times, and in all places, where the circumstances are similar.

Having stated these rules, in the light of which we are to interpret the language of the promises, I will say a few words in regard to when a promise becomes due, and on what conditions we may realize its fulfillment. I have said some of the same things in the last volume of the Evangelist. But I wish to repeat them in this connection, and add something more.

- (1.) All the promises of sanctification in the Bible, from their very nature necessarily imply the exercise of our own agency in receiving the thing promised. As sanctification consists in the right exercise of our own agency, or in obedience to the law of God, a promise of sanctification must necessarily be conditioned upon the exercise of faith in the promise. And its fulfillment implies the exercise of our own powers in receiving it.
- (2.) It consequently follows, that a promise of sanctification, to be of any avail to us, must be due at some certain time, expressed or implied in the promise: for if the fulfillment of the promise implies the exercise of our own agency, the promise is a mere nullity to us, unless we are able to understand when it becomes due, or at what time we are to expect and plead its fulfillment.
- (3.) A promise in the present tense is on demand. In other words, it is always due, and its fulfillment may be plead and claimed by the promisee at any time.
- (4.) A promise due at a future specified time, is after that time on demand, and may at any time thereafter be plead as a promise in the present tense.
- (5.) A great many of the Old Testament promises became due at the advent of Christ. Since that time they are to be considered and used as promises in the present tense. The Old Testament saints could not plead their fulfillment to them; because they were either expressly or impliedly informed, that they were not to be fulfilled until the coming of Christ. All that class of promises, therefore, that became due "in the last days," "at the

end of the world," i.e. the Jewish dispensation, are to be regarded as now due or as promises in the present tense.

- (6.) Notwithstanding these promises are now due, yet they are expressly or impliedly conditioned upon the exercise of faith, and the right use of the appropriate means by us, to receive their fulfillment.
- (7.) When a promise is due, we may expect the fulfillment of it at once or gradually, according to the nature of the blessing. The promise that the world shall be converted in the latter day, does not imply that we are to expect the world to be converted at any one moment of time; but that the Lord will commence it at once, and hasten it in its time, according to the faith and efforts of the church. On the other hand, when the blessing promised may in its nature be fulfilled at once, and when the nature of the case makes it necessary that it should be, then its fulfillment may be expected whenever we exercise faith.
- (8.) There is a plain distinction between promises of grace and of glory. Promises of glory are of course not to be fulfilled until we arrive at heaven. Promises of grace, unless there be some express or implied reason to the contrary, are to be understood as applicable to this life.
- (9.) A promise also may be unconditional in one sense, and conditional in another; e.g. promises made to the church as a body may be absolute and their fulfillment be secure and certain, sooner or later, while their fulfillment to any generation of the church or to any particular individuals of the church, may be and must be conditioned upon their faith and the appropriate use of means. Thus the promise of God that the church should possess the land of Canaan was absolute and unconditional in such a sense as that the church, at some period, would and certainly must take possession of that land. But the promise was conditional in the sense that the entering into possession, by any generation, depended entirely upon their own faith and the appropriate use of means. So the promise of the world's conversion, and the sanctification of the church under the reign of Christ, is unconditional in the sense, that it is certain that those events will at some time occur, but when they will occur--what generation of individuals shall receive this blessing, is necessarily conditioned upon their faith. This principle is plainly recognized by Paul in Heb. 4:6, 11: "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief;" "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

I come now to consider the question directly, and wholly as a Bible question, whether entire and permanent sanctification is in such a sense attainable in this life as to make its attainment an object of rational pursuit.

Let me first, however, recall your attention to what this blessing is. Simple obedience to the law of God is what I understand to be present, and its continuance to be permanent sanctification. The law is and forever must be the only standard. Whatever departs from this law on either side, must be false. Whatever requires more or less than the law of God, I reject as having nothing to do with the

question.

It will not be my design to examine a great number of scripture promises, but rather to show that those which I do examine, fully sustain the position I have taken. One is sufficient, if it be full and its application just, to settle this question forever. I might occupy many lectures in the examination of the promises, for they are exceedingly numerous, and full, and in point. But as I have already given several lectures on the promises, my design is now to examine only a few of them, more critically than I did before. This will enable you to apply the same principles to the examination of the scripture promises generally.

- 1. I begin by referring you to the law of God, as given in Deut. 10:12: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Upon this passage I remark:
  - (1.) It professedly sums up the whole duty of man to God--to fear and love Him with all the heart, and all the soul.
  - (2.) Although this is said of Israel, yet it is equally true of all men. It is equally binding upon all, and is all that God requires of any man in regard to Himself.
  - (3.) Obedience to this requirement is entire sanctification.

See Deut. 30:6: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Here we have a promise couched in the same language as the command just quoted. Upon this passage I remark:

- (1.) It promises just what the law requires. It promises all that the first and great commandment any where requires.
- (2.) Obedience to the first commandment always implies obedience to the second. It is plainly impossible that we should "love God, whom we have not seen," and "not love our neighbor whom we have seen."
- (3.) This promise, on its very face, appears to mean just what the law means--to promise just what the law requires.
- (4.) If the law requires a state of entire sanctification, or if that which the law requires is a state of entire sanctification, then this is a promise of entire sanctification.
- (5.) As the command is universally binding upon all and applicable to all, so this promise is universally applicable to all who will lay hold upon it.
- (6.) Faith is an indispensable condition to the fulfillment of this promise. It is entirely impossible that we should love God with all the heart, without confidence in Him. God



begets love in man, in no other way, than by so revealing Himself as to inspire confidence,--that confidence which works by love. In Rules 10 and 11, for the interpretation of the promises, it is said, that "where a command and a promise are given in the same language, we are bound to interpret the language alike in both cases, unless there be some manifest reason for a different interpretation." Now here, there is no perceivable reason why we should not understand the language of the promise as meaning as much as the language of the command. This promise appears to have been designed to cover the whole ground of the requirement.

- (7.) Suppose the language in this promise to be used in a command, or suppose that the form of this promise were changed into that of a command. Suppose God should say as He does elsewhere, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul;" who would doubt that God designed to require a state of entire sanctification or consecration to Himself. How then are we to understand it when used in the form of a promise? See Rules 14 and 15 "If his bountifulness equal his justice, his promises of grace must be understood to mean as much as the requirements of his justice." "If He delights in giving as much as in receiving, his promises must mean as much as the language of his requirements."
  - (8.) This promise is designed to be fulfilled in this life. The language and connection imply this: I "will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."
  - (9.) This promise as it respects the church, at some day, must be absolute and certain. So that God will undoubtedly, at some period, beget this state of mind in the church. But to what particular individuals and generation this promise will be fulfilled must depend upon their faith in the promise.
- 2. See Jer. 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Upon this passage, I remark:
    - (1.) It was to become due, or the time its fulfillment may be claimed and expected, was at the advent of Christ. This is unequivocally settled in Heb. 8:8-12, where this promise is quoted at length as being applicable to the gospel day.
    - (2.) This is undeniably a promise of entire sanctification. It is a promise that the "law shall be written in the heart." It means that the very temper and spirit required by the law

shall be begotten in the soul. Now if the law requires entire sanctification or perfect holiness, this is certainly a promise of it; for it is a promise of all that the law requires. To say that this is not a promise of entire sanctification, is the same absurdity as to say, that perfect obedience to the law is not entire sanctification; and this last is the same absurdity as to say that something more is our duty than what the law requires; and this again is to say that the law is imperfect and unjust.

- (3.) A permanent state of sanctification is plainly implied in this promise.
  - (a) The reason for setting aside the first covenant was, that it was broken: "Which my covenant they brake." One grand design of the New Covenant is, that it shall not be broken, for then it will be no better than the first.
  - (b) Permanency is implied in the fact, that it is to be engraven in the heart.
  - (c) Permanency is plainly implied in the assertion, that God will remember their sin no more. In Jer. 32:39, 40, where the same promise is in substance repeated, you will find it expressly stated that the covenant is to be "everlasting;" and that He will so "put his fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Him." Here permanency is as expressly promised as it can be.
  - (d) Suppose the language of this promise to be thrown into the form of a command. Suppose God to say, "Let my law be within your hearts, and let it be in your inward parts, and let my fear be so within your hearts that you shall not depart from me. Let your covenant with me be everlasting." If this language were found in a command, would any man in his senses doubt that it meant perfect and permanent sanctification? If not, by what rule of sober interpretation does he make it mean any thing else when found in a promise? It appears to be the most profane trifling, when such language is found in a promise, to make it mean less than it does when found in a command. See Rule 17.
- (4.) This promise as it respects the Church, at some period of its history, is unconditional, and its fulfillment certain. But in respect to any particular individuals or generation of the church, its fulfillment is necessarily conditioned upon their faith.
- (5.) The church, as a body, have certainly never received this new covenant. Yet doubtless multitudes, in every age of the Christian dispensation, have received it. And God will hasten the time when it shall be so fully accomplished, that there shall be no need for one man to say to his brother, "Know ye the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest."
- (6.) It should be understood that this promise was made to the Christian church and not all to the Jewish church. The saints, under the old dispensation, had no reason to expect the fulfillment of this and kindred promises to themselves, because their fulfillment was expressly deferred until the commencement of the Christian dispensation.

- (7.) It has been said, that nothing more is promised than regeneration. But were not the Old Testament saints regenerated? Yet it is expressly said that they received not the promises. Heb. 11:13, 39, 40: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Here we see that these promises were not received by the Old Testament saints. Yet they were regenerated.
- (8.) It has also been said that the promise implied no more than the final perseverance of the saints. But I would inquire, did not the Old Testament saints persevere? And yet we have just seen, that the Old Testament saints did not receive these promises in their fulfillment.
- 3. I will next examine the promise in Ezek. 36:25-27: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Upon this I remark:
  - (1.) It was written within nineteen years after that which we have just examined in Jer. It plainly refers to the same time and is a promise of the same blessing.
  - (2.) It seems to be admitted, nor can it be denied, that this is a promise of entire sanctification. The language is very definite and full. "Then," referring to some future time when it should become due, "will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean." Mark the first promise is, "ye shall be clean." If to be "clean" does not mean entire sanctification, what does it mean?

The second promise is, "from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." If to be cleansed "from all filthiness and all idols," be not a state of entire sanctification, what is?

The third promise is, "a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh." If to have a "clean heart," a "new heart," a "heart of flesh," in opposition to a "heart of stone,"--be not entire sanctification, what is?

The fourth promise is, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments to do them."
  - (3.) Let us turn the language of these promises into that of command; and understand God as saying, "Make you a clean heart, a new heart, and a new spirit; put away all your

iniquities, all your filthiness, and all your idols; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them." Now what man in the sober exercise of his senses, would doubt whether God meant to require a state of entire sanctification in such promises as these? The rules of legal interpretation, would demand that we should so understand Him. Rule 5: "The interest of the promisor in the accomplishment of His design or in fully meeting and relieving the necessities of the promisee, should also be taken into the account. If there is the most satisfactory proof, aside from that which is contained in the promise itself, that the promisor feels the highest interest in the promisee, and in fully meeting and relieving his necessities, then his promise must be understood accordingly."

If this is so, what is the fair and proper construction of this language when found in a promise. I do not hesitate to say that to me it is amazing that any doubt should be left on the mind of any man whether, in these promises, God means as much as in his commands couched in the same language; e.g. Ezek. 18:30, 31: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" Now that the language in the promise under consideration, should mean as much as the language of this command, is demanded by every sober rule of interpretation. And who ever dreamed, that when He required His people to put away all their iniquities, He only meant that they should put away a part of their iniquities?

- (4.) This promise respects the church, and it cannot be pretended that it has ever been fulfilled according to its proper import, in any past age of the church.
- (5.) As it regards the church, at a future period of its history, this promise is absolute, in the sense that it certainly will be fulfilled.
- (6.) It was manifestly designed to apply to Christians under the new dispensation, rather than to the Jews under the old dispensation. The sprinkling of clean water and the outpouring of the Spirit, seem plainly to indicate that the promise belonged more particularly to the Christian dispensation. It undeniably belongs to the same class of promises with that in Jer. 31:31-34, Joel 2:28, and many others, that manifestly look forward to the gospel day as the time when they shall become due. As these promises have never been fulfilled, in their extent and meaning, their complete fulfillment remains to be realized by the church as a body. And those individuals and that generation will take possession of the blessing, who understand and believe and appropriate them to their own case.
- 4. I will next examine the promise in the text, 1 Thess. 5:23, 24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Upon this I remark:
  - (1.) That according to Prof. Robinson's Lexicon, the language used here is the strongest form of expressing perfect or entire sanctification.

- (2.) It is admitted, that this is a prayer for and a promise of entire sanctification.
- (3.) The very language shows, that both the prayer and the promise refer to this life, as it is a prayer for the sanctification of the body as well as the soul; also that they might be preserved, not after, but unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- (4.) This is a prayer of inspiration, to which is annexed an express promise that God will do it.
- (5.) It is, from the necessity of the case, conditioned upon our faith, as sanctification without faith is naturally impossible.
- (6.) Now if this promise, with those that have already been examined, do not honestly, and fully, settle the question of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life, it is difficult to understand how any thing can be settled by appeal to scripture.

There are great multitudes of promises to the same import, to which I might refer you, and which if examined in the light of the foregoing rules of interpretation, would be seen to heap up demonstration upon demonstration, that this is a doctrine of the Bible. Only examine them in the light of these plain, self evident principles, and it seems to me, that they cannot fail to produce conviction.

I will not longer occupy your time in the examination of the promises, but in my next will mention several other considerations in support of this doctrine.

#### LECTURE IV.

February 12, 1840

#### **SANCTIFICATION- No. 4**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

Having examined a few of the promises in proof of the position, that a state of entire sanctification is attainable in this life, I will now proceed to mention other considerations in support of this doctrine.

- 5. Christ prayed for the entire sanctification of saints in this life. "I pray not," He says, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil of the world." He did not pray that they should be kept from persecution or from natural death, but He manifestly prayed, that they should be kept from sin. Suppose Christ had commanded them

to keep themselves from the evil of the world; what should we understand him to mean by such a command?

- 6. Christ has taught us to pray for entire sanctification in this life; "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Now, if there is entire sanctification in heaven, Christ requires us to pray for it on earth. And is it probable that He has taught us to pray for that which He knows never can be or will be granted?
- 7. The Apostles evidently expected Christians to attain this state in this life.--See Col. 4:12: "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Upon this passage I remark:
  - (1.) It was the object of the efforts of Epaphras, and a thing which he expected to effect, to be instrumental in causing those Christians to be "perfect and complete in all the will of God."
  - (2.) If this language does not describe a state of entire sanctification, I know of none that would. If "to be perfect and complete in all the will of God," be not Christian perfection, what is?
  - (3.) Paul knew that Epaphras was laboring to this end, and with this expectation; and he informed the church of it in a manner that evidently showed his approbation of the views and conduct of Epaphras.
- 8. That the Apostles expected Christians to attain this state is further manifest, from 2 Cor. 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness, in the fear of God."

Now does not the Apostle speak in this passage as if he really expected those to whom he wrote "to perfect holiness in the fear of God?" Observe how strong and full the language is, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." If "to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and all filthiness of the spirit, and to perfect holiness," be not entire sanctification, what is? That he expected this to take place in this life, is evident from the fact, that he requires them to be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh as well as of the spirit.

- 9. All the intermediate steps can be taken. Therefore, the end can be reached. There is certainly no point in our progress towards entire sanctification, where it can be said, we can go no further. To this it has been objected, that though all the intermediate steps can be taken, yet the goal can never be reached in this life, just as five may be divided by three, ad infinitum, without exhausting the fraction. Now this illustration deceives the mind that uses it, as it may the minds of those who listen to it. It is true that you can never exhaust the fraction in dividing five by three, for the plain reason that the division may be carried on, ad infinitum. But in the case of entire sanctification, all the intermediate steps can be taken; for there is an end, or state of entire sanctification; and that too, at a point infinitely short of infinite.

- 10. That this state may be attained in this life, I argue from the fact that provision is made against all the occasions of sin. Men sin only when they are tempted. And it is expressly asserted that in every temptation provision is made for our escape. Certainly if it is possible for us to escape without sin, under every temptation, then a state of entire and permanent sanctification is attainable.
- 11. Full provision is made for overcoming the three great enemies of our souls; the world, the flesh, and the devil.
  - (1.) The world--"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ."
  - (2.) The flesh--"If ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."
  - (3.) Satan--"The shield of faith shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." "And God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Now all sober rules of Biblical criticism require us to understand the passages I have quoted, in the sense I have quoted them.

- 12. It is evident from the fact, expressly stated, that abundant means are provided for the accomplishment of this end. Eph. 4:10-16: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, where by they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." Upon this passage, I remark:
  - (1.) That what is here spoken of is plainly applicable only to this life. It is in this life that the apostles, evangelists, prophets and teachers exercise their ministry. The means, therefore, are applicable, and so far as we know, only applicable to this life.
  - (2.) The Apostle here manifestly teaches that these means are designed, and adequate to perfecting the whole Church as the body of Christ, "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Now observe--
    - (a.) These means are for the perfecting of the saints, till the whole Church, as a perfect man, "has come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." If

this is not entire sanctification, what is? That this is to take place in this world, is evident from what follows. For the Apostle adds, "that we henceforth," (i.e. after arriving at this perfection,) "be no more tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

- (3.) It should be observed that this is a very strong passage in support of the doctrine, inasmuch as it asserts that abundant means are provided for the sanctification of the Church in this life. And as the whole includes all its parts, there must be sufficient provision for the sanctification of each individual.
- (4.) If the work is ever to be effected, it is by these means. But these means are used only in this life. Entire sanctification then must take place in this life.
- (5.) If this passage does not teach a state of entire sanctification, such a state is nowhere mentioned in the Bible. And if believers are not here said to be wholly sanctified by these means, and of course in this life, I know not that it is anywhere taught that they shall be sanctified at all.
- (6.) But suppose this passage to be put in the language of a command, how should we understand it? Suppose the saints commanded to be perfect, and to "grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," could any thing less than entire sanctification be understood by such requisitions? Then by what rule of sober criticism, I would inquire, can this language used in this connection, mean any thing less than I have supposed it to mean?
- 13. God is able to perform this work in and for us. Eph. 3:14-19: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Upon this passage I remark:
  - (1.) Paul evidently prays here for the entire sanctification of believers in this life. It is implied in our being "rooted and grounded in love," and being "filled with all the fulness of God," to be as perfect in our measure and according to our capacity, as He is. If to be filled with the fulness of God, does not imply a state of entire sanctification, what does?
  - (2.) That Paul did not see any difficulty in the way of God's accomplishing this work, is manifest from what he says in the 20th verse--"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, &c."
- 14. The Bible nowhere represents death as the termination of sin in the saints, which it could



not fail to do, were it true that they cease not to sin until death. It has been the custom of the Church, for a long time, to console individuals, in view of death, by the consideration, that it would be the termination of all their sin. And how almost universal has been the custom in consoling the friends of deceased saints, to mention this as a most important fact, that now they had ceased from sin. Now if death is the termination of sin in the saints, and if they never cease to sin until they pass into eternity, too much stress never has been or can be laid upon that circumstance; and it seems utterly incredible that no inspired writer should ever have noticed the fact. The representations of scripture are all right over against this idea. It is said, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors, and their works to follow them." Here it is not intimated that they rest from their sins, but from their good works in this life; such works as shall follow, not to curse but to bless them. The representations of scripture are that death is the termination of the saint's suffering and labors of love, for the good of men and the glory of God, in this world. But no where in the Bible is it intimated that the death of a saint is the termination of his serving the devil.

But if it be true that Christians continue to sin till they die, and death is the termination, and the only termination of their sin, it seems to me impossible that the scripture representations on the subject should be what they are.

- 15. The Bible representations of death are utterly inconsistent with its being an indispensable means of sanctification. Death is represented as an enemy in the Bible. But if death is the only condition upon which men are brought into a state of entire sanctification, his agency is as important and as indispensable as the influence of the Holy Ghost. When death is represented in the Bible as any thing else than an enemy, it is because he cuts short the sufferings of the saints, and introduces them into a state of eternal glory--not because he breaks them off from communion with the devil! How striking is the contrast between the language of the Church and that of inspiration on this subject! The Church is consoling the Christian in view of death, that it will be the termination of his sins,--that he will then cease to serve the devil and his own lusts. The language of inspiration, on the other hand, is that he will cease, not from wicked but from good works, and labors, and sufferings for God in this world. The language of the Church is that then he will enter upon a life of unalterable holiness--that then, and not till then, he shall be entirely sanctified. The language of inspiration is, that because he is sanctified, death shall be an entrance into a state of eternal glory.
- 16. Ministers are certainly bound to set up some definite standard, to which as the ministers of God, they are bound to insist upon complete conformity. And now I would ask, what other standard can they and dare they set up than this? To insist upon any thing less than this, is to turn Pope and grant an indulgence to sin. But to set up this standard, and then inculcate that conformity to it is not, as a matter of fact, attainable in this life, is as absolutely to take the part of sin against God, as it would be to insist upon repentance in theory, and then avow that in practice it was not attainable.

And here let me ask Christians what they expect ministers to preach? Do you think they have a right to connive at any sin in you, or to insist upon any thing else as a practicable fact than that you should abandon every iniquity? It is sometimes said, that with us entire sanctification is a hobby. But I would humbly ask what else can we preach? Is not every

minister bound to insist in every sermon that men shall wholly obey God? And because they will not compromise with any degree or form of sin, are they to be reproached for making the subject of entire obedience a hobby? I ask, by what authority can a minister preach any thing less? And how shall any minister dare to inculcate the duty as a theory, and yet not insist upon it as a practical matter, as something to be expected of every subject of God's kingdom?

- 17. A denial of this doctrine has the natural tendency to beget the very apathy witnessed in the Church. Professors of religion go on in sin, without much conviction of its wickedness. Sin unblushingly stalks abroad even in the Church of God, and does not fill Christians with horror, because they expect its existence as a thing of course. Tell a young convert that he must expect to backslide, and he will do so of course, and with comparatively little remorse, because he looks upon it as a kind of necessity. And being led to expect it, you find him in a few months after his conversion away from God, and not at all horrified with his state. Just so you inculcate the idea among Christians that they are not expected to abandon all sin, and they will of course go on in sin with comparative indifference. You reprove them for their sins, and they will say, "O we are imperfect creatures; we do not pretend to be perfect, nor do we expect we ever shall be in this world." Many such answers as these will show you at once the God dishonoring and soul-ruining tendency of a denial of this doctrine.
- 18. A denial of this doctrine prepares the minds of ministers to temporize and wink at great iniquity in their churches. Feeling as they certainly must, if they disbelieve this doctrine, that a great amount of sin in all believers is to be expected as a thing of course, their whole preaching, and spirit, and demeanor, will be such as to beget a great degree of apathy among Christians in regard to their abominable sins.
- 19. If this doctrine is not true, how profane and blasphemous is the covenant of every church of every evangelical denomination. Every church requires its members to make a solemn covenant with God and with the church, in the presence of God and angels, and with their hands upon the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the blessed Jesus, "to abstain from all ungodliness and every worldly lust, to live soberly and righteously in this present world." Now if the doctrine of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life is not true, what profane mockery is this covenant! It is a covenant to live in a state of entire sanctification, made under the most solemn circumstances, enforced by the most awful sanctions, and insisted upon by the minister of God standing at the altar. Now what right has any man on earth to require less than this?

And again, what right has any man on earth to require this, unless it is a practical thing?

Suppose when this covenant was proposed to a convert about to unite with the church, he should take it to his closet, and spread it before the Lord, and inquire whether it was right for him to make such a covenant--and whether the grace of the gospel can enable him to fulfill it. Do you suppose the Lord Jesus would reply, that if he made that covenant, he certainly would, and must as a matter of course live in the habitual violation of it, as long as he live, and that His grace was not sufficient to enable him to keep it? Would he in such a case have any right to take upon himself this covenant? No, no more than he

would have a right to lie.

- 20. It has long been maintained by orthodox divines, that a person is not a Christian who does not aim at living without sin--that unless he aim at perfection, he manifestly consents to live in sin; and is therefore certainly impenitent. It has been, and I think truly, said, that if a man does not in the fixed purpose of his heart, aim at total abstinence from sin, and at being wholly conformed to the will of God, he is not yet regenerated, and does not so much as mean to cease from abusing God.

Now if this is so, and I believe it certainly is, I would ask how a person can aim at and intend to do what he knows to be impossible. Is it not a contradiction to say that a man can intend to do what he knows he cannot do? To this it has been objected, that if true, it proves too much--that it would prove that no man ever was a Christian who did not believe in this doctrine. To this I reply:

- (1.) A man may believe in the attainability of and aim at attaining what is really a state of entire sanctification, although he may not call it by that name. This I believe to be the real fact with Christians: and they would much more frequently attain what they aim at, did they know how to appropriate the grace of Christ to their own circumstances. Mrs. President Edwards, for example, firmly believed that she could attain to a state of entire consecration. She aimed at and manifestly attained it, and yet such were her views of physical depravity, that she did not call her state one of entire sanctification. It has been common for Christians to suppose that a state of entire consecration was attainable; but while they believed in physical depravity, they would not of course call even entire consecration, entire sanctification. Mrs. Edwards believed in, aimed at, and attained, entire consecration. She aimed at what she believed was attainable, and nothing more. She called it by the same name with her husband, who was opposed to the doctrine of Christian perfection, as held by the Wesleyan Methodists; manifestly on the ground of his notions of physical depravity. I care not what this state is called, if the thing be fully explained and insisted upon, together with the means of attaining it. Call it what you please, Christian perfection, heavenly mindedness, or a state of entire consecration; by all these I understand the same thing. And it is certain, that by whatever name it is called, the thing must be aimed at to be attained. The practicability of its attainment must be admitted, or it cannot be aimed at.

And now I would humbly inquire whether it is not true, that to preach any thing short of this is not to give countenance to sin?

- 21. Another argument in favor of this doctrine is that the gospel, as a matter of fact, has often, not only temporarily but permanently and perfectly overcome every form of sin, in different individuals. Who has not seen the most beastly lusts, drunkenness, lasciviousness, and every kind of abomination, long indulged and fully ripe, entirely and for ever slain by the power of the grace of God? Now how was this done? Only by bringing this sin fully into the light of the gospel, and showing the individual the relation that sin sustained to the death of Christ.

Now nothing is wanting to slay any and every sin, but for the mind to be fully baptized

into the death of Christ, and to see the bearings of one's own sins upon the sufferings and agonies and death of the blessed Jesus. Let me state a fact to illustrate my meaning. A habitual and most inveterate smoker of tobacco, of my acquaintance, after having been plied with almost every argument to induce him to break the power of the habit, and relinquish its use, in vain, on a certain occasion, lighted his pipe and was about to put it to his mouth, when the inquiry was started, did Christ die to purchase this vile indulgence for me? He hesitated, but the inquiry pressed him, Did Christ die to purchase this vile indulgence for me? The relation of this conduct to the death of Christ, instantly broke the power of the habit, and from that day he has been free.

I could relate many other facts more striking than this, where a similar view of the relation of a particular sin to the atonement of Christ, has in a moment, not only broken the power of the habit, but destroyed entirely and for ever, the appetite for similar indulgences.

If the most inveterate habits of sin, and even those that involve physical consequences, and have deeply debased the physical constitution, and rendered it a source of overpowering temptation to the mind, can be and often have been utterly broken up, and for ever slain, by the grace of God, why should it be doubted that by the same grace, a man can triumph over all sin, and that for ever.

- 22. If this doctrine is not true, what is true upon the subject? It is certainly of great importance that ministers should be definite in their instructions, and if Christians are not expected to be wholly conformed to the will of God in this life, how much is expected of them? Who can say, hitherto canst thou, must thou come, but no further? It is certainly absurd, not to say ridiculous, for ministers to be for ever pressing Christians up to higher and higher attainments, saying at every step you can and must go higher, and yet all along informing them that they are expected to fall short of their whole duty--that they can as a matter of fact, be better than they are, far better, indefinitely better; but still it is not expected that they will do their whole duty. I have often been pained to hear men preach who are afraid to commit themselves in favor of the whole truth; and who are yet evidently afraid of falling short, in their instructions of insisting that men shall stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God." They are evidently sadly perplexed to be consistent, and well they may be, for in truth there is no consistence in their views and teachings. If they do not inculcate, as a matter of fact, that men ought to do and are expected to do their whole duty, they are sadly at a loss to know what to inculcate. They have evidently many misgivings about insisting upon less than this, and they fear to go to the full extent of apostolic teaching on this subject. And in their attempts to throw in qualifying terms and caveats, to avoid the impression that they believe in the doctrine of entire sanctification, they place themselves in a truly awkward position. Cases have occurred in which ministers have been asked, how far we may go, must go, and are expected to go, in depending upon the grace of Christ, and how holy men may be, and are expected to be, and must be, in this life? They could give no other answer to this, than that they can be a great deal better than they are. Now this indefiniteness is a great stumbling block to the Church. It cannot be according to the teachings of the Holy Ghost.
- 23. The tendency of a denial of this doctrine is, to my mind, conclusive proof that the doctrine

itself must be true. Many developments in the recent history of the Church throw light upon this subject. Who does not see that the facts developed in the temperance reformation, have a direct and powerful bearing upon this question? It has been ascertained that there is no possibility of completing the temperance reformation, except by adopting the principle of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. Let a temperance lecturer go forth, as an Evangelist to promote revivals on the subject of temperance--let him inveigh against drunkenness, while he admits and defends the moderate use of alcohol, or insinuates, at least, that total abstinence is not expected or practicable. In this stage of the temperance reformation every one can see that such a man could make no progress; that he would be employed like a child in building dams of sand to obstruct the rushing of mighty waters. It is as certain as that causes produce their effects, that no permanent reformation could be effected, short of adopting the total abstinence principle.

And now if this is true as it respects the temperance reformation, how much more so when applied to the subjects of holiness and sin. A man might by some possibility, even in his own strength, over come his habits of drunkenness, and retain, what might be called the temperate use of alcohol. But no such thing is possible in a reformation from sin. Sin is never overcome by any man in his own strength. If he admits into this creed the necessity of any degree of sin, or if he allows in practice any degree of sin, he becomes impenitent--consents to live in sin--and is of course abandoned by the Holy Spirit, the certain result of which is, a relapsing into a state of legal bondage to sin. And this is probably a true history of ninety-nine one hundredths of the Church. It is just what might be expected from the views and practice of the Church upon this subject.

The secret of backsliding is that reformations are not carried deep enough. Christians are not set with all their hearts to aim at a speedy deliverance from all sin. But on the contrary are left and in many instances taught to indulge the expectation that they shall sin as long as they live. I never shall forget probably, the effect produced on my mind by reading, when a young convert, in the diary of David Brainerd, that he never expected to make any considerable attainments in holiness in this life. I can now easily see that this was a natural inference from the theory of physical depravity which he held. But not perceiving this at the time, I doubt not that this expression of his views had a very injurious effect upon me for many years. It led me to reason thus, "If such a man as David Brainerd did not expect to make much advancement in holiness in this life, it is vain for me to expect such a thing."

The fact is, if there be any thing that is important to high attainments in holiness, and to the progress of the work of sanctification in this life, it is the adoption of the principle of total abstinence from sin. Total abstinence from sin, must be every man's motto, or sin will certainly sweep him away as a flood. That cannot possibly be a true principle in temperance, that leaves the causes which produce drunkenness to operate in their full strength. Nor can that be true in holiness which leaves the root unextracted, and the certain causes of spiritual decline and backsliding at work in the very heart of the Church. And I am fully convinced that until Evangelists and Pastors adopt and carry out in principle and practice the principle of total abstinence from all sin, they will as certainly find themselves every few months, called to do their work over again, as a temperance lecturer would who should admit the moderate use of alcohol.

- 24. Again, the tendency of the opposite view of this subject, shows that that cannot be true. Who does not know, that to call upon sinners to repent, and at the same time to inform them that they will not, and cannot, and are not expected to repent, would for ever prevent their repentance. Suppose you say to a sinner, you are naturally able to repent; but it is certain that you never will repent in this life, either with or without the Holy Ghost. Who does not see that such teaching would as surely prevent his repentance as he believed it? So, say to a professor of religion, you are naturally able to be wholly conformed to God; but it is certain that you never will be in this life, either in your own strength or by the grace of God. If this teaching be believed, it will just as certainly prevent his sanctification as the other teaching would the repentance of the sinner. I can speak from experience on this subject. While I inculcated the common views, I was often instrumental in bringing Christians under great conviction, and into a state of temporary repentance and faith. But falling short of urging them up to a point where they would become so acquainted with Christ, as to abide in Him, they would of course soon relapse again into their former state. I never saw, and can now understand that I had no reason to expect to see, under the instructions which I then gave, such a state of religious feeling, such steady and confirmed walking with God, among Christians, as I have seen since the change in my views and instructions.

Some further considerations under this head, I must defer till my next.

## LECTURE V.

February 26, 1840

### **SANCTIFICATION- No. 5**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

I might urge a great many other considerations, and as I have said, fill a book with scriptures, and arguments, and demonstrations, of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life.

But I forbear, and at present will urge only one more consideration, a consideration which has great weight in some minds. It is a question of great importance, at least in some minds, whether any actually ever did attain this state. Some who believe it attainable, do not consider it of much importance to show that it has actually been attained. Now I freely admit, that it may be attainable, although it never has been attained. Yet it appears to me that as a matter of encouragement to the Church, it is of great importance whether, as a matter of fact, a state of entire holiness has been attained in this life. This question covers much ground. But for the sake of brevity, I design to examine but one case, and see whether there is reason to believe that in one instance, at least, it has been attained. The case to which I allude is that of Paul. And I propose to take up and examine the

passages that speak of him, for the purpose of ascertaining whether there is evidence that he ever attained to this state in this life.

And here let me say that to my own mind it seems plain, that Paul and John, to say nothing of the other Apostles, designed and expected the Church to understand them as speaking from experience, and as having received of that fulness which they taught to be in Christ and in His gospel.

And I wish to say again and more expressly, that I do not rest the practicability of attaining a state of entire holiness at all upon the question, whether any ever have attained it any more than I would rest the question, whether the world ever will be converted upon the fact whether it ever has been converted. I have been surprised, when the fact that a state of entire holiness has been attained, is urged as one argument among a great many to prove its attainability, and that too merely as an encouragement to Christians to lay hold upon this blessing, that objectors and reviewers fasten upon this as the doctrine of sanctification, as if by calling this particular question in doubt, they could overthrow all the other proof of its attainability. Now this is utterly absurd. When, then, I examine the character of Paul with this object in view, if it should not appear clear to you that he did attain this state, you are not to overlook the fact, that its attainability is settled by other arguments, on grounds entirely independent of the question whether it has been attained or not; and that I merely use this as an argument, simply because to me it appears forcible, and to afford great encouragement to Christians to press after this state.

I will first make some remarks in regard to the manner in which the language of Paul, when speaking of himself, should be understood; and then proceed to an examination of the passages which speak of his Christian character.

*1. His revealed character, demands that we should understand him to mean all that he says, when speaking in his own favor.*

*2. The Spirit of inspiration would guard him against speaking too highly of himself.*

*3. No man ever seemed to possess greater modesty, and to feel more unwilling to exalt his own attainments.*

*4. If he considered himself as not having attained a state of entire sanctification, and as often, if not in all things, falling short of his duty, we may expect to find him acknowledging this in the deepest self-abasement.*

*5. If he is charged with living in sin, and with being wicked in any thing, we may expect him, when speaking under inspiration, not to justify, but unequivocally condemn himself in those things.*

Now in view of these facts, let us examine those scriptures in which he speaks of himself and is spoken of by others.

- o (1.) 1 Thess. 2:10: "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe." Upon this text I remark:

- (a) Here he unqualifiedly asserts his own holiness. This language is very strong, "How holily, justly, and unblamably." If to be holy, just, and unblamable, be not entire sanctification, what is?
  - (b) He appeals to the heart-searching God for the truth of what he says, and to their own observation; calling on God and on them also to bear witness, that he had been holy and without blame.
  - (c) Here we have the testimony of an inspired Apostle, in the most unqualified language, asserting his own entire sanctification. Was he deceived? Can it be that he knew himself all the time to have been living in sin? If such language as this does not amount to an unqualified assertion that he had lived among them without sin, what can be known by the use of human language?
- (2.) 2 Cor. 6:3-7: "Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things, approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." Upon these verses I remark:
- (a) Paul asserts that he gave no offence in any thing, but in all things approved himself as a minister of God. Among other things he did this, "by pureness," "by the Holy Ghost," "by love unfeigned," "and by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." How could so modest a man as Paul speak of himself in this manner, unless he knew himself to be in a state of entire sanctification, and thought it of great importance that the Church should know it?
- (3.) 2 Cor. 1:12: "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." This passage plainly implies the same thing, and was manifestly said for the same purpose--to declare the greatness of the grace of God as manifested in himself.
- (4.) Acts 24:16: "And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Paul doubtless at this time had an enlightened conscience. If an inspired Apostle could affirm, that he "always" had a "conscience void of offence toward God and toward men", must he not have been in a state of entire sanctification?
- (5.) 2 Tim. 1:3: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." Here again he affirms, that he serves God with a pure conscience. Could this be, if he was often, and perhaps every day, as some suppose, violating his conscience?



- (6.) Gal. 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." This does not assert, but strongly implies that he lived without sin.
- (7.) Gal. 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." This text also affords the same inference as above.
- (8.) Phil. 1:21: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Here the Apostle affirms that for him to live was as if Christ lived in the Church. How could he say this, unless his example, and doctrine, and spirit, were those of Christ?
- (9.) Acts 20:26: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." Upon this I remark:
  - (a) This passage, taken in its connection, shows clearly, the impression that Paul desired to make upon the minds of those to whom he speaks.
  - (b) It is certain that he could in no proper sense be "pure of the blood of all men," unless he had done his whole duty. If he had been sinfully lacking in any grace, or virtue, or labor, could he have said this? Certainly not.
- (10.) 1 Cor. 4:16, 17: "Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every Church." I remark:
  - (a) Here Paul manifestly sets himself up as an example to the Church. How could he do this, if he were living in sin?
  - (b) He sent Timotheus to them to refresh their memories, in regard to his doctrine and practice; implying that what he taught in every Church, he himself practiced.
- (11.) 1 Cor. 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Here Paul commands them to follow him, "as he followed Christ;" not so far as he followed Christ, as some seem to understand it, but to follow him because he followed Christ. How could he, in this unqualified manner, command the Church to copy his example, unless he knew himself to be blameless?
- (12.) Phil. 3:17, 20: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Here again, Paul calls upon the Church to follow him, and particularly to notice those that did copy his example, and assigns as the reason, "for our conversation is in heaven."

- (13.) Phil. 4:9: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." The Philippians were commanded to "do those things which they had learned, and received, and SEEN in him." And then he adds, that if they "do those things, the God of peace shall be with them." Now can it be that he meant that they should understand any thing less, than that he had lived without sin among them?

I will next examine those passages which are supposed by some, to imply that Paul was not in a state of entire sanctification.

- (14.) Acts 15:36-40: "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus: and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren, unto the grace of God." Upon this passage I remark:
  - (a) This contention between Paul and Barnabas was founded upon the fact, that John, who was a nephew of Barnabas, had once abruptly left them in their travels, it would seem without any justifiable reason, and had returned home.
  - (b) It appears that the confidence of Barnabas in his nephew was restored.
  - (c) That Paul was not as yet satisfied of the stability of his character, and thought it dangerous to trust him as a traveling companion and fellow-laborer. It is not intimated, nor can it be fairly implied that either of them sinned in this contention.
  - (d) It sufficiently accounts for what occurred, that they disagreed in their views of the expediency of taking John with them.
  - (e) Being men of principle, neither of them felt it to be his duty to yield to the opinion of the other.
  - (f) If either were to be blamed, it seems that Barnabas was in fault, rather than Paul, inasmuch as he determined to take John with him without having consulted Paul. And he persisted in this determination until he met with such firm resistance on the part of Paul, that he took John and sailed abruptly for Cyprus; while Paul choosing Silas, as he companion, was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God, and departed. Now certainly there is nothing in this transaction, that Paul or any good man, or an angel, under the circumstances, need to have been ashamed of, that we can discover. It does not appear, that Paul ever acted more from a regard to the glory of God and the good of religion, than in this transaction. And I would humbly inquire what spirit is that which finds sufficient evidence in this case to

charge an inspired Apostle with rebellion against God? But even admitting that he did sin in this case, where is the evidence that he was not afterwards sanctified when he wrote the epistles?--for this was before the writing of any of his epistles.

- (15.) Acts 23:1-5: "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." In this case sinful anger has been imputed to Paul; but so far as I can see, without any just reason. To my mind it seems plain, that the contrary is to be inferred. It appears that Paul was not personally acquainted with the then officiating high priest. And he manifested the utmost regard to the authority of God in quoting from the Old Testament, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people"--implying, that notwithstanding the abuse he had received, he should not have made the reply, had he known him to have been the high priest.
- (16.) Rom. 7: from the 14th to the 25th verse, have by many been supposed to be an epitome of Paul's experience at the time he wrote the epistle. Upon this I remark:
  - (a) The connection and drift of Paul's reasoning shows that the case of which he was speaking, whether his own or the case of some one else, was adduced by him to illustrate the influence of the law upon the carnal mind.
  - (b) This is a case in which sin had the entire dominion, and overcame all his resolutions of obedience.
  - (c) That his use of the singular pronoun and in the first person, proves nothing in regard to whether or not he was speaking of himself, for this is common with him, and with other writers, when using illustrations.
  - (d) He keeps up the personal pronoun and passes into the 8th chapter; at the beginning of which, he represents himself or the person of whom he is speaking, as being not only in a different but in an exactly opposite state of mind. Now if the seventh chapter contains Paul's experience, whose experience is this in the eighth chapter? Are we to understand them both as the experience of Paul? If so, we must understand him as first speaking of his experience before and then after he was sanctified. He begins the eighth chapter by saying, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" and assigns as a reason, that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made him free from the law of sin and death." The law of sin and death was that law in his members, or the influence of the flesh, of which he had so bitterly complained in the seventh chapter. But now it appears that he has passed into a state in which

he is made free from this influence of the flesh--is emancipated and dead to the world, and to the flesh, and in a state in which "there is no condemnation." Now if there was no condemnation in the state in which he was, it must have been, either because he did not sin; or, if he did sin, because the law did not condemn him; or because the law of God was repealed or abrogated. Now if the penalty of the law was so set aside in his case, that he could sin without condemnation, this is a real abrogation of the law. For a law without a penalty is no law, and if the law is set aside, there is no longer any standard, and he was neither sinful nor holy. But as the law was not and cannot be set aside, its penalty was not and cannot be so abrogated as not to condemn every sin. If Paul lived without condemnation, it must be because he lived without sin.

To me it does not appear as if Paul speaks of his own experience in the seventh chapter of Romans, but that he merely supposes a case by way of illustration, and speaks in the first person and in the present tense, simply because it was convenient and suitable to his purpose. His object manifestly was, in this and in the beginning of the eighth chapter, to contrast the influence of the law and of the gospel--to describe in the seventh chapter the state of a man who was living in sin, and every day condemned by the law, convicted and constantly struggling with his own corruptions, but continually overcome,--and in the eighth chapter to exhibit a person in the enjoyment of gospel liberty, where the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in the heart by the grace of Christ. The seventh chapter may well apply either to a person in a backslidden state, or to a convicted person who had never been converted. The eighth chapter can clearly be applicable to none but to those who are in a state of entire sanctification.

I have already said that the seventh chapter contains the history of one over whom sin has dominion. Now to suppose that this was the experience of Paul when he wrote the epistle, or of any one who was in the liberty of the gospel, is absurd and contrary to the experience of every person who ever enjoyed gospel liberty. And further, this is as expressly contradicted in the sixth chapter as it can be. As I said, the seventh chapter exhibits one over whom sin has dominion; but God says, in the sixth chapter and fourteenth verse, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

I remark finally upon the passage, that if Paul was speaking of himself in the seventh chapter of Romans, and really giving a history of his own experience, it proves nothing at all in regard to his subsequent sanctification; for,

- (e) If this was his experience at the time he wrote the epistle, it would prove nothing in regard to what afterwards transpired in his own experience.
- (f) The eighth chapter shows conclusively, that it was not this experience at the time he wrote the epistle. The fact that the translators have separated the seventh and eighth chapters, as I have before said, has led to much error in the understanding of this passage. Nothing is more certain than that the two chapters were designed to describe not only different experiences, but experiences opposite to each other. And that both these experiences should belong to the same person at the same time, is manifestly impossible. If therefore Paul is speaking in this connection of his own experience, we are bound to understand the eighth chapter as describing his experience at the time he wrote the epistle; and the seventh chapter as descriptive of a former experience.

Now therefore, if any one understands the seventh chapter as describing a Christian experience, he must understand it as giving the exercises of one in a very imperfect state; and the eighth chapter as descriptive of a soul in a state of entire sanctification. So that this epistle, instead of militating against the idea of Paul's entire sanctification, upon the supposition that he was speaking of himself, fully establishes the fact that he was in that state.

- (17.) Phil. 3:10-15: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Upon this passage I remark:
  - (a) Here is plain allusion to the Olympic games, in which men ran for a prize, and were not crowned until the end of the race, however well they might run.
  - (b) Paul speaks of two kinds of perfection here, one of which he claims to have attained, and the other he had not. The perfection which he had not attained, was that which he did not expect to attain until the end of his race, nor indeed until he had attained the resurrection from the dead. Until then he was not and did not expect to be perfect, in the sense that he should "apprehend all that for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus." But all this does not imply that he was not living without sin, any more than it implies that Christ was living in sin when he said, "I must walk today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." In this Christ speaks of a perfection which he had not attained.

Now it is manifest that it was the glorified state to which Paul had not attained, and which perfection he was pressing after. But in the 15th verse, he speaks of another kind of perfection which he professed to have attained. "Let us therefore," he says, "as many as are perfect, be thus minded;" i.e. let us be pressing after this high state of perfection in glory, "if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Now it is manifest to my mind, that Paul does not in this passage, teach expressly or impliedly that he was living in sin, but the direct opposite--that he meant to say as he had said in many other places, that he was unblamable in respect to sin, but that he was aspiring after higher attainments, and meant to be aspiring after higher attainments, and meant to be satisfied with nothing short of eternal glory.

In relation to the character of Paul, let me say:

- (a) If Paul was not sinless, he was an extravagant boaster, and such language used by any minister in these days would be considered as the language of an extravagant boaster.
- (b) This setting himself up as an example, so frequently and fully, without any caution or qualification, was highly dangerous to the interests of the Church, if he were not in a state of entire sanctification.
- (c) It was as wicked as it was dangerous.
- (d) His language in appealing to God, that in his life and heart he was blameless, was blasphemous, unless he was really what he professed to be; and if he was what he professed to be, he was in a state of entire sanctification.
- (e) There is no reason for doubting his having attained this state.
- (f) It is doing dishonor to God, to maintain, under these circumstances, that Paul had not attained the blessing of entire sanctification.
- (g) He no where confesses sin after he became an Apostle, but invariably justifies himself, appealing to man and to God, for his entire integrity and blamelessness of heart and life.
- (h) To accuse him of sin in these circumstances, without evidence, is not only highly injurious to him, but disgraceful to the cause of religion.
- (i) To charge him with sin, when he claims to have been blameless, is either to accuse him of falsehood or delusion.
- (k) To maintain the sinfulness of this Apostle, is to deny the grace of the gospel, and charge God foolishly. And I cannot but inquire, why is this great effort in the Church to maintain, that Paul lived in sin, and was never wholly sanctified till

death?

## LECTURE VI.

March 11, 1840

### **SANCTIFICATION- No. 6**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

In pursuing this subject, I am

### **VII. To answer some objections to the doctrine of entire sanctification.**

In proceeding to answer some of the more prominent objections to the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, I will begin with those passages of scripture that are supposed to contradict it.

- 1. 1 Kings 8:46: "If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near." On this passage I remark:
  - (1.) That this sentiment, in nearly the same language, is repeated in 2 Chron. 6:26, and in Eccl. 7:20, where the same original word in the same form is used.
  - (2.) These are the strongest passages I know of in the Old Testament, and the same remarks are applicable to the three.
  - (3.) I will quote, for the satisfaction of the reader, the note of Adam Clarke upon this passage, and also that of Barclay, the celebrated and highly spiritual author of "An Apology for the True Christian Divinity." And let me say, that they appear to me to be satisfactory answers to the objection founded upon these passages.

CLARKE: "If they sin against thee."--This must refer to some general defection from truth; to some species of false worship, idolatry, or corruption of the truth and ordinances of the Most High; as for it, they are here stated to be delivered into the hands of their enemies, and carried away captive, which was the general punishment of idolatry; and what is called, ver. 47, acting perversely, and committing wickedness.

"If they sin against thee, for there is no man that sinneth not."

The second clause, as it is here translated, renders the supposition, in the first clause, entirely nugatory; for, if there be no man that sinneth not, it is useless to say, IF they sin: but this contradiction is taken away by reference to the original *ki yechetau lak*, which should be translated IF they shall sin against thee: or, should they sin against thee, *ki ein Adam asher lo yecheta*; "For there is no man that may not sin:" i.e. there is no man impeccable, none infallible; none that is not liable to transgress. This is the true meaning of the phrase in various parts of the Bible, and so our translators have understood the original; for, even in the 31st verse of this chapter, they have translated *yecheta*, IF a man TRESPASS; which certainly implies he might or might not do it: and in this way they have translated the same word, IF a soul SIN, in Lev. 5:1, and 6:2, 1 Sam. 2:25, 2 Chron. 6:22, and in several other places. The truth is, the Hebrew has no mood to express words in the permissive or optative way, but to express this sense it uses the future tense of the conjugation *kal*.

"This text has been a wonderful stronghold for all who believe that there is no redemption from sin in this life; that no man can live without committing sin: and that we cannot be entirely freed from it till we die. 1. The text speaks no such doctrine, it only speaks of the possibility of every man sinning; and this must be true of a state of probation. 2. There is not another text in the divine records that is more to the purpose than this. 3. The doctrine is flatly in opposition to the design of the gospel; for Jesus came to save his people from their sins, and to destroy the works of the devil. 4. It is a dangerous and destructive doctrine, and should be blotted out of every Christian's creed. There are too many who are seeking to excuse their crimes by all means in their power; and we need not embody their excuses in a creed, to complete their deception, by stating that their sins are unavoidable."

BARCLAY: "Secondly--Another objection is from two places of scripture, much of one signification. The one is, 1 Kings 8:46: For there is no man that sinneth not. The other is Eccl. 7:20: For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

"I answer: 1. These affirm nothing of a daily and continual sinning, so as never to be redeemed from it; but only that all have sinned, or that there is none that doth not sin, though not always, so as never to cease to sin; and in this lies the question.



Yea, in that place of the Kings he speaks within two verses of the returning of such with all their souls and hearts; which implies a possibility of leaving off sin. 2. There is a respect to be had to the seasons and dispensations; for if it should be granted that in Solomon's time there were none that sinned not, it will not follow that there are none such now, or that it is a thing not now attainable by the grace of God under the gospel. 3. And lastly, This whole objection hangs upon a false interpretation; for the original Hebrew word may be read in the Potential Mood, thus, There is no man who may not sin, as well as in the Indicative; so both the Old Latin, Junius, and Tremellius, and Votablus, have it; and the same word is so used, Psalm 119:11: Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee, in the Potential Mood, and not in the Indicative; which being more answerable to the universal scope of the scriptures, the testimony of the truth, and the sense of almost all interpreters, doubtless ought to be so understood, and the other interpretation rejected as spurious."

- o (4.) Whatever may be thought of the views of these authors, to me, it is a plain and satisfactory answer to the objection founded upon these passages, that the objection might be strictly true under the Old Testament dispensation, and prove nothing in regard to the attainability of a state of entire sanctification under the New. What, does the New Testament dispensation differ nothing from the Old in its advantages for the acquisition of holiness? If it be true that no one under the comparatively dark dispensation of Judaism, attained a state of entire and permanent sanctification, does that prove such a state unattainable under the Gospel? It is expressly stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "the Old Covenant made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." Under the Old Covenant, God expressly promised that He would make a new one with the house of Israel in "writing the law in their hearts," and in "engraving it in their inward parts." And this New Covenant was to be made with the house of Israel, under the Christian dispensation. What then do all such passages in the Old Testament prove in relation to the privileges and holiness of Christians under the New Testament?
- o (5.) Whether any of the Old Testament saints did so far receive the New Covenant by way of anticipation, as to enter upon a state of entire and permanent sanctification, it is not my present purpose to inquire. Nor will I inquire, whether, admitting that Solomon said in his day, that "there was not a just man upon the earth that liveth and sinneth not," the same could with equal truth have been asserted of every generation under the Jewish dispensation.
- o (6.) It is expressly asserted of Abraham and multitudes of the Old Testament saints, that they "died in faith, not having received the promises." Now what can this mean? It cannot be that they did not know the promises, for to them the promises were made. It cannot mean that they did not receive Christ, for the Bible expressly asserts that they did,--that "Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day,"--that Moses, and indeed all the Old Testament

saints, had so much knowledge of Christ, as a Savior to be revealed, as to bring them into a state of salvation. But still they did not receive the promise of the Spirit as it is poured out under the Christian dispensation. They did not receive the light, and the glory of the Christian dispensation, nor the fulness of the Holy Spirit. And it is asserted in the Bible, that "they without us," i.e. without our privileges, "could not be made perfect."

- 2. The next objection is founded upon the Lord's Prayer. In this, Christ has taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Here it is objected that if a person should become entirely sanctified, he could no longer use this clause of this prayer, which it is said, was manifestly designed to be used by the Church to the end of time. Upon this prayer I remark:
  - (1.) Christ has taught us to pray for entire and permanent sanctification, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."
  - (2.) He designed that we should expect this prayer to be answered, or that we should mock God, by asking what we did not believe was agreeable to His will, and that too, which we know could not consistently be granted; and that we are to repeat this insult to God as often as we pray.
  - (3.) The petition for forgiveness of our trespasses it is plain, must apply to past sins, and not to sins we are committing at the time we make the prayer; for it would be absurd and abominable to pray for the forgiveness of a sin which we were then in the act of committing.
  - (4.) This prayer cannot properly be made in respect to any sin of which we have not repented; for it would be highly abominable in the sight of God, to pray for the forgiveness of a sin of which we did not repent.
  - (5.) If there be any hour or day in which a man has committed no actual sin, he could not consistently make this prayer in reference to that hour or that day.
  - (6.) But at that very time, it would be highly proper for him to make this prayer in relation to all his past sins, and that too although he may have repented of and confessed them, and prayed for their forgiveness, a thousand times before.
  - (7.) And although his sins may be forgiven, he ought still to feel penitent in view of them,--to repent of them both in this world and in the world to come, as often as he remembers them. And it is perfectly suitable, so long as he lives in the world, to say the least, to repent and repeat the request for forgiveness. For myself, I am unable to see why this passage should be made a stumbling block; for if it be improper to pray for the forgiveness of past sins of which we have repented, then it is improper to pray for forgiveness at all. And if this prayer cannot be used with propriety in reference to past sins, of which we have already repented, it cannot properly be used at all, except upon the absurd supposition, that we are to pray for the forgiveness of sins which we are now committing, and of which we have not repented. And if it be improper to use this form of

prayer in reference to all past sins of which we have repented, it is just as improper to use it in reference to sins committed to-day or yesterday, of which we have repented.

- 3. Another objection is founded on James 3:1, 2: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." Upon this passage I remark:
  - (1.) The term rendered masters here, may be rendered teachers, critics, or sensors, and be understood either in a good or bad sense. The Apostle exhorts the brethren not to be many masters, because if they are so they will incur the greater condemnation; "for," says he, "in many things we offend all." The fact that we all offend is here urged as a reason why we should not be many masters; which shows that the term masters is here used in a bad sense. "Be not many masters," for if we are masters, "we shall receive the greater condemnation," because we are all offenders. Now I understand this to be the simple meaning of this passage; do not many [or any] of you become sensors, or critics, and set yourselves up to judge and condemn others. For inasmuch as you have all sinned yourselves, and we are all great offenders, we shall receive the greater condemnation, if we set ourselves as sensors. "For with what judgment ye judge ye shall judge, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."
  - (2.) It does not appear to me that the Apostle designs to affirm any thing at all of the present character of himself or of those to whom he wrote; nor to have had the remotest allusion to the doctrine of entire sanctification, but simply to affirm a well established truth in its application to a particular sin; that if they became sensors, and injuriously condemned others, inasmuch as they had all committed many sins, they should receive the greater condemnation.
  - (3.) That the Apostle did not design to deny the doctrine of Christian perfection or entire sanctification, as maintained in these lectures, seems evident from the fact that he immediately subjoins, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body."
- 4. Another objection is founded upon 1 John 1:8: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Upon this I remark:
  - (1.) This verse is immediately preceded by the assertion that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Now it would be very remarkable, if immediately after this assertion, the Apostle should mean to say that it does not cleanse us from all sin, and if we say it does we deceive ourselves. But if this objection be true, it involves the Apostle in as palpable a contradiction as could be expressed.
  - (2.) If the Apostle meant to say that we deceive ourselves, if we suppose ourselves to be in a state of entire sanctification, his assertion in the next verse is truly another wonderful contradiction. "If," he continues, "we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In another place he says, "all

unrighteousness is sin." Now, if it be true that God is really just to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness or from all sin, and "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us"--not shall, but actually does cleanse us,--"from all sin;" how remarkable it would be, if, between two such assertions as these, the Apostle meant to be understood to teach, that if we say His blood cleanseth us from all unrighteousness, we deceive ourselves!

- (3.) But the tenth verse shows plainly what the Apostle meant, for he merely repeats what he had said in the eighth verse: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar."

This then is the meaning of the whole passage. If we say that we are not sinners, i.e. have no sin to need the blood of Christ, that we have never sinned, and consequently need no Savior, we deceive ourselves. For we have sinned, and nothing but the blood of Christ cleanseth us from sin. And now, if we will not deny but confess that we have sinned, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "But if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

- 5. It has been objected to the view I have given of Jer. 31:31-34, that if that passage is to be considered as a promise of entire sanctification, this proves too much. Inasmuch as it is said, "they shall all know the Lord from the least to the greatest," therefore, says the objector, it would prove that all the Church has been in a state of entire sanctification ever since the commencement of the New Testament dispensation. To this objection I answer:
  - (1.) I have already, I trust, shown that this promise is conditioned upon faith, and that the blessing cannot possibly be received but by faith.
  - (2.) It is doubtless true that many have received this covenant in its fulness.
  - (3.) A promise may be unconditional or absolute, and certain of a fulfillment in relation to the whole Church as a body, in some period of its history, which is nevertheless conditional in relation to its application to any particular individuals or generation of individuals.
  - (4.) I think it is in entire keeping with the prophecies to understand this passage as expressly promising to the Church a day, when all her members shall be sanctified, and when "holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the bells of the horses." Indeed it appears to be abundantly foretold that the Church as a body shall, in this world, enter into a state of entire sanctification, in some period of her history; and that this will be the carrying out of these promises of the New Covenant, of which we are speaking. But it is by no means an objection to this view of the subject, that all the Church have not yet entered into this state.

It has been maintained, that this promise in Jer. has been fulfilled already. This has been argued--

- (1.) From the fact that the promise has no condition, expressed or implied, and the

responsibility therefore, rests with God.

- o (2.) That the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews quotes it as to be fulfilled at the advent of Christ. Now to this I answer:

It might as well be argued that all the rest of the promises and prophecies relating to the gospel day were fulfilled, because the time had come when the promise was due. Suppose it were denied that the world would ever be converted, or that there ever would be any more piety in the world than there has been and is at present; and when the promises and prophecies respecting the latter day glory, and the conversion of the world, should be adduced in proof, that the world is to be converted, it should be replied that these promises had already been fulfilled--that they were unconditional--and that the advent of the Messiah, was the time when they became due. But suppose, that in answer to this, it should be urged that nothing has ever yet occurred in the history of this world that seems at all to have come up to the meaning of these promises and prophecies--that the world has never been in the state which seems to be plainly described in these promises and prophecies--and that it cannot be that any thing the world has yet experienced is what is meant by such language as is used in the Bible, in relation to the future state of the world. Now suppose, to this it should be replied, that the event has shown what the promises and prophecies really meant--that we are to interpret the language by the fact--that as the promises and prophecies were unconditional, and the gospel day has really come when they were to be fulfilled, we certainly know, whatever their language may be, that they meant nothing more than what the world has already realized? This would be precisely like the reasoning of some persons in relation to Jer. 31:31-34. They say--

- (a) The promises are without condition.
- (b) The time has come for their fulfillment. Therefore the world has realized their fulfillment, and all that was intended by them; that the facts in the case settle the question of construction and interpretation; and we know that they never intended to promise a state of entire sanctification, because as a matter of fact no such state has been realized by the Church. Indeed! Then the Bible is the most hyperbolic, not to say ridiculous book in the universe. If what the world has seen in regard to the extension and universal prevalence of the Redeemer's kingdom, is all that the promises relating to these events really mean, then the Bible of all books in the world, is the most calculated to deceive mankind. But who, after all, in the exercise of his sober sense, will admit any such reasoning as this? Who does not know, or may not know, if he will use his common sense, that although these promises and prophecies are unconditionally expressed, yet that they are as a matter of fact really conditioned upon a right exercise of human agency, and that a time is to come, when the world shall be converted; and that the conversion of the world implies in itself a vastly higher state of religious feeling and action in the Church than has, for centuries, or perhaps ever been witnessed--and that the promise of the New Covenant is still to be fulfilled in a higher sense than it ever has been? If any man doubts this, I must believe that he does not understand his Bible.

Faith, then, is an indispensable condition of the fulfillment of all promises of spiritual blessings, the reception of which involves the exercise of our agency.

Again, it is not a little curious, that those who give this interpretation to these promises imagine that they see a very close connection, if not an absolute identity of our views and those of modern Antinomian Perfectionists. Now it is of importance to remark, that this is one of the leading peculiarities of that sect. They insist that these are promises without condition, and that consequently their own watchfulness, prayers, exertions, and the right exercise of their own agency, are not at all to be taken into the account in the matter of their perseverance in holiness--that the responsibility is thrown entirely upon Christ, inasmuch as His promises are without condition. The thing that He has promised, say they, is that, without any condition, He will keep them in a state of entire sanctification--that therefore, for them to confess sin, is to accuse Christ of breaking His promises. For them to make any efforts at perseverance in holiness is to set aside the gospel and go back to the law. For them even to fear that they shall sin, is to fear that Christ will tell a lie.

The fact is that this, and their setting aside the moral law, are the two great errors of their whole system. It would be easy to show, that the adoption of this sentiment, that these promises are without condition, expressed or implied, has led to some of their most fanatical and absurd opinions and practices. They take the ground that no condition is expressed, and that therefore none is implied; overlooking the fact, that the very nature of the thing promised, implies that faith is the condition upon which its fulfillment must depend. It is hoped, therefore, that our brethren who charge us with perfectionism, will be led to see that to themselves, and not to us, does this charge belong.

These are the principal passages that occur to my mind, and those I believe upon which the principal stress has been laid by the opposers of this doctrine. And as I do not wish to protract the discussion, I shall omit the examination of other passages, as I design in my future lectures to answer such objections as may seem to be of weight. This I design to do without either the spirit or the form of controversy, noticing and answering such objections as may from time to time occur to my own mind, or as may be suggested by others.

[Objections concluded in our next.]

## LECTURE VII.

March 25, 1840

### **SANCTIFICATION- No. 7**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole

spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

There are many objections to the doctrine of entire sanctification, besides those derived from the passages of scripture I have considered. Some of these objections, are doubtless honestly felt, and deserve to be considered. I will then proceed to notice such of them as now occur to my mind.

- 6. It is objected that the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, tends to the errors of modern perfectionism. This objection has been urged by some good men, and, I doubt not, honestly urged. But still I cannot believe that they have duly considered the matter. It seems to me that one fact will set aside this objection. It is well known that the Wesleyan Methodists have, as a denomination, from the earliest period of their history, maintained this doctrine in all its length and breadth. Now if such is the tendency of the doctrine, it is passing strange that this tendency has never developed itself in that denomination. So far as I can learn, the Methodists have been perfectly exempt from the errors held by modern perfectionists. Perfectionists, as a body, and I believe with very few exceptions, have arisen out of those denominations that deny the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life.

Now the reason of this is obvious to my mind. When professors of religion, who have been all their life subject to bondage, begin to inquire earnestly for deliverance from their sins, they have found neither sympathy nor instruction, in regard to the prospect of getting rid of them in this life. Then they have gone to the Bible, and there found, in almost every part of it, Christ presented as a Savior from their sins. But when they proclaim this truth, they are at once treated as heretics and fanatics by their brethren, until, being overcome of evil, they fall into censoriousness; and finding the Church so decidedly and utterly wrong, in opposition to this one great important truth, they lose confidence in their ministers and the Church, and, being influenced by a wrong spirit, Satan takes the advantage of them, and drives them to the extreme of error and delusion. This I believe to be the true history of many of the most pious members of the Calvinistic churches. On the contrary, Methodists are very much secured against these errors. They are taught that Jesus Christ is a Savior from all sin in this world. And when they inquire for deliverance, they are pointed to Jesus Christ, as a present and all-sufficient Redeemer. Finding sympathy and instruction, on this great and agonizing point, their confidence in their ministers and their brethren, remains and they walk quietly with them.

And here let me say, that it is my full conviction, that there are but two ways in which ministers of the present day can prevent members of their churches from becoming perfectionists. One is, to suffer them to live so far from God, that they will not inquire after holiness of heart; and the other is, most fully to inculcate the glorious doctrine, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and that it is the high privilege and the duty of Christians, to live in a state of entire consecration to God.

It seems to me impossible that the tendency of this doctrine should be to the peculiar errors of the modern perfectionists, and yet not an instance occur among all the Methodist ministers, or the thousands of their members, for one hundred years.

I can say, from my own experience, that since I have understood and fully taught the doctrine as I now hold it, I see no tendency among those who listen to my instructions to these errors, while in churches not far distant, where the doctrine which we inculcate here is opposed, there seems to be a constant tendency, among their most pious people to Antinomian perfectionism. How can this be accounted for on any other principle than the one above stated? I can truly say that those persons here, who have been the first to lay hold of the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, and who give the highest evidence of enjoying this blessing, have been at the farthest remove from the errors of the modern perfectionists. I might state a great many facts upon this subject, but for the sake of brevity I omit them.

But aside from the facts, what is the foundation of all the errors of the modern perfectionists? Every one who has examined them knows that they may be summed up in this, the abrogation of the moral law. And now I would humbly inquire, what possible tendency can there be to their errors, if the moral law be preserved in the system of truth? In these days a man is culpably ignorant of that class of people, who does not know that the "head and front of their offending," and falling, is the setting aside the law of God. The setting aside the Christian ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, proceeds upon the same foundation, and manifestly grows out of the abrogation of the law of God. But retain the law of God, as the Methodists have done, and as other denominations have done, who from the days of the Reformation have maintained this same doctrine, and there is certainly no tendency to Antinomian perfectionism.

I have many things to say upon the tendency of this doctrine, but at present this must suffice.

By some it is said to be identical with Perfectionism; and attempts are made to show in what particulars Antinomian Perfectionism and our views are the same. On this I remark:

- o (1.) It seems to have been a favorite policy of certain controversial writers for a long time, instead of meeting a proposition in the open field of fair and Christian argument, to give it a bad name, and attempt to put it down, not by force of argument, but by showing that it is identical with or sustains a near relation to Pelagianism, Antinomianism, Calvinism, or some other ism, against which certain classes of minds are deeply prejudiced. In the recent controversy between what is called Old and New School Divinity, who has not witnessed with pain the frequent attempts that have been made to put down the New School Divinity, as it is called, by calling it Pelagianism, and quoting certain passages from Pelagius, and other writers, to show the identity of sentiment that exists between them.

This is a very unsatisfactory method of attaching or defending any doctrine. There are, no doubt, many points of agreement between Pelagius and all other orthodox divines, and so there are many points of disagreement between them. There are also many points of agreement between modern Perfectionists and all Evangelical Christians, and so there are many points of disagreement between them and the Christian Church in general. That there



are some points of agreement between their views and my own, is no doubt true. And that we totally disagree in regard to those points that constitute their great peculiarities, is, if I understand them, also true.

But did I really agree in all points with Augustine, or Edwards, or Pelagius, or the modern Perfectionists, neither the good or the ill name of any of these would prove my sentiments to be either right or wrong. It would remain after all, to show that those with whom I agreed were either right or wrong, in order, on the one hand, to establish that for which I contend, or on the other to condemn that which I maintain. It is often more convenient to give a doctrine or an argument a bad name, than it is soberly and satisfactorily to reply to it.

- (2.) It is not a little curious, that we should be charged with holding the same sentiments with the Perfectionists; and yet they seem to be more violently opposed to our views, since they have come to understand them, than almost any other persons whatever. I have been informed by one of their leaders, that he regards me as one of the master builders of Babylon. And I also understand, that they manifest greater hostility to the Oberlin Evangelist than almost any other class of persons.
- (3.) I will not take time, nor is it needful to go into an investigation or a denial even of the supposed or alleged points of agreement between us and the Perfectionists. But for the present it must be sufficient to request you to read and examine for yourselves.

With respect to the modern Perfectionists, those who have been acquainted with their writings, know that some of them have gone much further from the truth than others. Some of their leading men, who commenced with them and adopted their name, stopped far short of adopting some of their most abominable errors; still maintaining the authority and perpetual obligation of the moral law, and thus have been saved from going into many of the most objectionable and destructive notions of that sect. There are many more points of agreement between that class of Perfectionists and the orthodox Church, than between any other class of them and the Christian Church. And there are still a number of important points of difference, as every one knows who is possessed of correct information upon this subject.

I abhor the idea of denouncing any class of men as altogether and utterly wrong. I am well aware that there are many of those who are termed Perfectionists, who as truly abhor the extremes of error into which many of that name have fallen, as perhaps do any persons living.

- 7. Another objection is, that persons could not live in this world, if they were entirely sanctified. Strange! Does holiness injure a man? Does perfect conformity to all the laws of life and health, both physical and moral, render it impossible for a man to live? If a man break off from rebellion against God, will it kill him? Does there appear to have been any thing in Christ's holiness, inconsistent with life and health? The fact is, that this objection is founded in a gross

mistake in regard to what constitutes entire sanctification. It is supposed by those who hold this objection, that this state implies a continual and most intense degree of excitement, and many of those things which I have shown in my first lecture, are not at all implied in it. I have thought, that it is rather a glorified than a sanctified state, that most men have before their minds whenever they consider this subject. When Christ was upon earth, He was in a sanctified but not a glorified state. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master." Now what is there in the moral character of Jesus Christ, as represented in His history, aside from His miraculous powers, that may not and ought not to be fully copied into the life of every Christian? I speak not of His knowledge, but of His spirit and temper. Ponder well every circumstance of His life that has come down to us, and say, beloved, what is there in it, that may not, by the grace of God, be copied into your own. And think you, that a full imitation of Him in all that relates to His moral character would render it impossible for you to live in this world?

- 8. Again, it is objected against our professing a state of entire sanctification, on the ground that it not only implies present obedience to the law of God, but such a formation and perfection of holy habits, as to render it certain that we shall never again sin. And that a man can no more tell when he is entirely sanctified, than he can tell how many holy acts it will take to form holy habits of such strength that he will never again sin. To this I answer:
  - (1.) The law of God has nothing to do with requiring this formation of holy habits. It is satisfied with present obedience, and only demands at every present moment, the full devotion of all our powers to God. It never, in any instance, complains that we have not formed such holy habits that we shall sin no more.
  - (2.) If it be true that a man is not entirely sanctified until his holy habits are so fixed, as to render it certain that he will never sin again, then Adam was not in a state of entire sanctification previously to the fall, nor were the angels in this state before their fall.
  - (3.) If this objection be true, there is not a saint nor an angel in heaven, so far as we can know, that can, with the least propriety profess a state of entire sanctification; for how can they know that they have performed so many holy acts, as to have created such habits of holiness as to render it certain that they will never sin again.
  - (4.) Entire sanctification does not depend upon the formation of holy habits, nor at all consist in this. But both entire and permanent sanctification are based alone upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Perseverance in holiness is to be ascribed entirely to the influence of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, both now and to the end of our lives, instead of being secured at all by any habits of holiness which we may or ever shall have formed.
- 9. Another objection is, that the doctrine tends to spiritual pride. And is it true indeed that to become perfectly humble tends to pride? But entire humility is implied in entire sanctification. Is it true that you must remain in sin, and of course cherish pride in order to avoid pride? Is your humility more safe in your own hands, and are you more secure against spiritual pride in refusing to receive Christ as your helper, than you would be at once to embrace Him as a full Savior?

- 10. Again it is objected that many who have embraced this doctrine, really are spiritually proud. To this I answer:
  - (1.) So have many who believed the doctrine of regeneration been deceived and amazingly puffed up with the idea that they have been regenerated, when they have not. But is this a good reason for abandoning the doctrine of regeneration, or any reason why the doctrine should not be preached?
  - (2.) Let me inquire, whether a simple declaration of what God has done for their souls, has not been assumed as itself sufficient evidence of spiritual pride on the part of those who embraced this doctrine, while there was in reality no spiritual pride at all? It seems next to impossible, with the present views of the Church, that an individual should really attain this state, and profess it in a manner so humble as not of course to be suspected of enormous spiritual pride? This consideration has been a snare to some who have hesitated and even neglected to declare what God had done for their souls, lest they should be accused of spiritual pride. And this has been a serious injury to their piety.
- 11. But again it is objected that this doctrine tends to censoriousness. To this I reply:
  - (1.) It is not denied that some who have professed to believe this doctrine have become censorious. But this no more condemns this doctrine than it condemns that of regeneration. And that it tends to censoriousness, might just as well be urged against every doctrine of the Bible as against this doctrine.
  - (2.) Let any Christian do his whole duty to the Church and the world in their present state--let him speak to them and of them as they really are, and he would of course incur the charge of censoriousness. It is therefore the most unreasonable thing in the world to suppose that the Church, in its present state, should not accuse any perfect Christian of censoriousness. Entire sanctification implies the doing of all our duty. But to do all our duty, we must rebuke sin in high places and in low places. Can this be done with all needed severity, without in many cases giving offence, and incurring the charge of censoriousness? No; it is impossible; and to maintain the contrary, would be to impeach the wisdom and holiness of Jesus Christ Himself.
- 12. It is objected that this doctrine lowers the standard of holiness to a level with our own experience. It is not denied that in some instances this may have been true. Nor can it be denied, that the standard of Christian perfection has been elevated much above the demands of the law, in its application to human beings in our present state of existence. It seems to have been forgotten, that the inquiry is, what does the law demand?--not of angels, and what would be entire sanctification in them; nor of Adam, previously to the fall, when his powers of body and mind were all in a state of perfect health; not what will the law demand of us in a future state of existence; not what the law may demand of the Church in some future period of its history on earth, when the human constitution, by the universal prevalence of correct and thorough temperance principles, may have acquired its pristine health and powers;--but the question is,

what does the law of God require of Christians of the present generation; of Christians in all respects in our circumstances, with all the ignorance and debility of body and mind which have resulted from the intemperance and abuse of the human constitution through so many generations?

The law levels its claims to us as we are, and a just exposition of it, as I have already said, under all the present circumstances of our being, is indispensable to a right apprehension of what constitutes entire sanctification.

To be sure, there may be danger of frittering away the claims of the law and letting down the standard. But I would humbly inquire whether, hitherto, the error has not been on the other side, and whether as a general fact, the law has not been so interpreted as naturally to beget the idea so prevalent, that if a man should become holy he could not live in this world? In a letter lately received from a beloved, and useful, and venerated minister of the gospel, while the writer expressed the greatest attachment to the doctrine of entire consecration to God, and said that he preached the same doctrine which we hold to his people every Sabbath, but by another name, still he added that it was revolting to his feelings, to hear any mere man set up the claim of obedience to the law of God. Now let me inquire, why should this be revolting to the feelings of piety? Must it not be because the law of God is supposed to require something of human beings in our state, which it does not and cannot require? Why should such a claim be thought extravagant, unless the claims of the living God be thought extravagant? If the law of God really requires no more of men than what is reasonable and possible, why should it be revolting to any mind to hear an individual profess, through the grace of God, to have attained that state? I know that the brother to whom I allude, would be almost the last man deliberately and knowingly to give any strained interpretation to the law of God; and yet, I cannot but feel that much of the difficulty that good men have upon this subject, has arisen out of a comparison of the lives of saints with a standard entirely above that which the law of God does or can demand of persons in all respects in our circumstances.

- 13. Another objection is, that as a matter of fact the grace of God is not sufficient to secure the entire sanctification of saints in this life. It is maintained, that the question of the attainability of entire sanctification in this life, resolves itself after all into the question, whether the Church is, and Christians are sanctified in this life. The objectors say that nothing is sufficient grace that does not as a matter of fact, secure the faith and obedience and perfection of the saints; and, therefore, that the provisions of the gospel are in fact to be measured by the results; and that the experience of the Church decides both the meaning of the promises and the provisions of grace. Now to this I answer:

If this objection be good for any thing in regard to entire sanctification, it is equally true in regard to the spiritual state of every person in the world. If the fact that men are not perfect, proves that no provisions are made for their perfection, their being no better than they are proves that there is no provision for their being any better than they are, or that they might have aimed at being any better, with any rational hope of success. But who, except a fatalist, will admit any such conclusion as this? And yet I do not see but this conclusion is inevitable from such premises.

- 14. Another objection to this doctrine is, that it is contrary to the views of some of the greatest and best men in the Church,--that such men as Augustine, Calvin, Doddridge, Edwards, &c., were of a different opinion. To this I answer:
  - (1.) Suppose they were;--we are to call no man father in such a sense as to yield up to him the forming of our views of Christian doctrine.
  - (2.) This objection comes with a very ill grace from those who wholly reject their opinions on some of the most important points of Christian doctrine.
  - (3.) Those men all held the doctrine of physical depravity, which was manifestly the ground of their rejecting the doctrine of entire consecration to God in this life. Maintaining as they seem to have done, that the constitutional susceptibilities of body and mind were depraved and sinful, consistency of course led them to reject the idea that persons could be entirely sanctified while in the body. Now I would ask what consistency is there in quoting them as rejecting the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, while the reason of this rejection in their minds, was founded on the doctrine of physical depravity, which notion is entirely denied by those who quote their authority?
- 15. But again it is objected, that if we should attain this state of entire consecration of sanctification, we could not know it until the day of Judgment, and that to maintain its attainability is vain, inasmuch as no one can know whether he has attained it or not. To this I reply:
  - (1.) A man's consciousness is the highest and best evidence of the present state of his own mind. I understand consciousness to be the mind's recognition of its own states, and that it is the highest possible evidence to our own minds of what passes in our minds.
  - (2.) With the law of God before us as our standard, the testimony of consciousness in regard to whether the mind is conformed to that standard or not, is the highest evidence which the mind can have of a present state of conformity to that rule.
  - (3.) It is a testimony which we cannot doubt any more than we can doubt our existence. How do we know that we exist? I answer: by our consciousness. How do I know that I breathe, or love, or hate, or sit, or stand, or lie down, or rise up--that I am joyful or sorrowful--in short, that I exercise any emotion or volition, or affection of mind--how do I know that I sin, or repent, or believe? I answer: by my own consciousness. No testimony can be "so direct and convincing as this."

Now in order to know that my repentance is genuine, I must intellectually understand what genuine repentance is. So if I would know whether my love to God or man, or obedience to the law is genuine, I must have clearly before my mind the real spirit, and meaning, and bearing of the law of God. Having this rule before my mind, my own consciousness affords "the most direct and convincing evidence possible" of whether my present state of mind is conformed to the rule. The Spirit of God is never employed in testifying to

what my consciousness teaches, but in setting in a strong light before the mind the rule to which I am to conform my life. It is His business to make me understand, to induce me to love and obey the truth; and it is the business of consciousness to testify to my own mind, whether I do or do not obey the truth when I apprehend it. A man may be mistaken in regard to the correctness of his knowledge of the law or truth of God. He may therefore mistake the character of his exercises. But when God so presents the truth as to give the mind assurance, that it understands His mind and will upon any subject, the mind's consciousness of its own exercises in view of that truth, is "the highest and most direct possible" evidence of whether it obeys or disobeys.

- (4.) If a man cannot be conscious of the character of his own exercises, how can he know when and of what he is to repent? If he has committed sin of which he is not conscious, how is he to repent of it? And if he has a holiness of which he is not conscious, how could he feel that he has peace with God?

But it is said a man may violate the law not knowing it, and consequently have no consciousness that he sinned, but that afterwards a knowledge of the law may convict him of sin. To this I reply, that if there was absolutely no knowledge that the thing in question was wrong, the doing of that thing was not sin, inasmuch as some degree of knowledge of what is right or wrong is indispensable to the moral character of any act. In such a case there may be a sinful ignorance which may involve all the guilt of those actions that were done in consequence of it; but that blame-worthiness lies in the ignorance itself, and not at all in the violation of the rule of which the mind was at the time entirely ignorant.

- (5.) The Bible every where assumes, that we are able to know, and unqualifiedly requires us to know what the moral state of our mind is. It commands us to examine ourselves, to know and to approve our own selves. Now how can this be done but by bringing our hearts into the light of the law of God, and then taking the testimony of our own consciousness, whether we are or are not in a state of conformity to the law? But if we are not to receive the testimony of our consciousness in regard to our sanctification, are we to receive it in respect to our repentance or any other exercise of our mind whatever? The fact is that we may deceive ourselves, by neglecting to compare ourselves with the right standard. But when our views of the standard are right, and our consciousness is a felt, decided, unequivocal state of mind, we cannot be deceived any more than we can be deceived in regard to our own existence.
- (6.) But it is said our consciousness does not teach us what the power and capacities of our minds are, and that therefore, if consciousness could teach us in respect to the kind of our exercises, it cannot teach us in regard to their degree, whether it is equal to the present capability of our mind. To this I reply:
  - (a) Consciousness does as unequivocally testify whether we do or do not love God

with all our heart, as it does whether we love Him at all. How does a man know that he lifts as much as he can, or runs, or leaps, or walks as fast as he is able? I answer: by his own consciousness. How does he know that he repents or loves with all his heart? I answer: by his own consciousness. This is the only possible way in which he can know it.

- (b) The objection implies that God has put within our reach no possible means of knowing whether we obey Him or not. The Bible does not directly reveal the fact to any man, whether he obeys God or not. It reveals his duty, but does not reveal the fact whether he obeys. It refers this testimony to his own consciousness. The Spirit of God sets our duty before us, but does not directly reveal to us whether we do it or not; for this would imply that every man is under constant inspiration.

But it is said the Bible directs our attention to the fact of whether we obey or disobey as evidence whether we are in a right state of mind or not. But I would inquire, how do we know whether we obey or disobey? How do we know any thing of our conduct but by our consciousness? Our conduct as observed by others is to them evidence of the state of our hearts. But, I repeat it, our consciousness of obedience to God, is the highest and indeed the only evidence of our true character.

- (c) If a man's own consciousness is not to be a witness, either for or against him, no other testimony in the universe can ever satisfy him of the propriety of God's dealing with him in the final Judgment. Let then thousand witnesses testify that a man had committed murder, still the man could not feel condemned for it unless his own consciousness bore testimony to the fact. So if ten thousand witnesses should testify that he had performed some good act, he could feel no self-complacency, or sense of self-approbation and virtue, unless his consciousness bore its testimony to the same fact. There are cases of common occurrence, where the witnesses testify to the guilt or innocence of a man contrary to the testimony of his own consciousness. When God convicts a man of sin, it is not by contradicting his consciousness; but by setting the consciousness which he had at the time in the clear strong light of his memory, causing him to discover clearly, and to remember distinctly, what light he had, what thoughts, what convictions; in other words, what consciousnesses he had at the time. And this, let me add, is the way and the only way in which the Spirit of God can convict a man of sin, thus bringing him to condemn himself. Now suppose that God should bear testimony against a man, that at such a time he did such a thing--that such and such were all the circumstances of the case--and suppose that, at the same time, the individual is unable to remember, and appears never to have had the least consciousness of the transaction. The testimony of God in this case, could not satisfy the man's mind, or lead him into a state of self-condemnation. The only possible way in which this state of mind could be induced, would be to arouse the memory of past consciousness, and cause the whole scene to start into living reality before his mind's eye, as it passed in his own consciousness at the time. But if he had no consciousness of any such thing, and

consequently no remembrance of it could possibly take place, to convict him of sin is naturally and for ever impossible.

- o (7.) Men may overlook what consciousness is. They may mistake the rule of duty--they may confound consciousness with a mere negative state of mind, or that state in which a man is not conscious of a state of opposition to the truth. Yet it must for ever remain true, that to our own minds "consciousness must be the highest possible evidence" of what passes within us. And if a man does not by his own consciousness know whether he does the best that he can, under the circumstances--whether he has a single eye to the glory of God--and whether he is in a state of entire consecration to God--he cannot know it in any way whatever. And no testimony whatever, either of God or man, could, according to the laws of his being, satisfy him, and beget in him either conviction of guilt on the one hand, or self-approbation on the other.
- o (8.) Finally, let me ask, how those who make this objection know that they are not in a sanctified state? Has God revealed it to them? Has He revealed it in the Bible? Does the Bible say to A.B., by name, you are not in a sanctified state? Or does it lay down a rule, in the light of which his own consciousness bears this testimony against him? Has God revealed directly by His Spirit, that he is not in a sanctified state? Or does He hold the rule of duty strongly before the mind, and thus awaken the testimony of consciousness, that he is not in this state?

Now just in the same way, consciousness testifies of those that are sanctified, that they are in that state. Neither the Bible, nor the Spirit of God, makes any new or particular revelation to them by name. But the Spirit of God bears witness with their spirits, by setting the rule in a strong light before them. He induces that state of mind that consciousness pronounces to be conformity to the rule. This is as far as possible from setting aside the judgment of God in the case, for consciousness is, under these circumstances, the testimony of God, and the way in which He convinces of sin on the one hand, and of entire consecration on the other.

Again, the objection that consciousness cannot decide in regard to the strength of our powers, and whether we really serve God with all our strength, seems to be based upon the false supposition that the law of God requires every power of body and mind to be excited at every moment to its full strength, and that too without any regard to the nature of the subject about which our powers are for the time being employed. In the first lecture on this subject, I endeavored to show and trust I did show, that perfect obedience to the law of God requires no such thing. Entire sanctification is entire consecration. Entire consecration is obedience to the law of God. And all that the law requires is, that our whole being be consecrated to God, and that the amount of strength to be expended in His service at any one moment of time, must depend upon the nature of the subject about which the powers are for the time being employed. And nothing is further from the truth than that obedience to the law of God requires every power of body and mind to



be constantly on the strain, and in the highest possible degree of excitement, and activity. Such an interpretation of the law of God as this, would be utterly inconsistent with life and health; and would write MENE, TEKEL upon the life and conduct of Jesus Christ Himself; for His whole history shows that He was not in a state of constant excitement to the full extent of His powers.

- 16. Again it is objected that, if this state were attained in this life, it would be the end of our probation. Probation, since the fall of Adam, or those points in which we are in a state of probation or trial, are:
  - (1.) Whether we will repent and believe the gospel;
  - (2.) Whether we will persevere in holiness to the end of life.

Some suppose that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, sets aside the idea of being at all in a state of probation after our conversion. They reason thus: If it is certain that the saints will persevere, then their probation is ended; because the question is already settled, not only that they will be converted, but that they will persevere to the end, and the contingency in regard to the event, is indispensable to the idea of probation. To this I reply:

That a thing may be contingent with man that is not at all so with God. With God, there is not and never was any contingency, with regard to the final destiny of any being. But with men, almost all things are contingencies. God knows with absolute certainty whether a man will be converted, and whether he will persevere. A man may know that he is converted, and may believe, that by the grace of God he shall persevere. He may have an assurance of this in proportion to the strength of his faith. But the knowledge of this fact is not at all inconsistent with the idea of his continuance in a state of trial till the day of his death; inasmuch as his perseverance depends upon the exercise of his own voluntary agency.

In the same way some say, that if we have attained a state of entire and permanent sanctification, we can no longer be in a state of probation. I answer, that perseverance in this state depends upon the promise and grace of God, just as the final perseverance of the saints does. In neither case can we have any other assurance of our perseverance than that of faith in the promise and grace of God; nor any other knowledge that we have arrived at this state, than that which arises out of a belief in the testimony of God, that He will preserve us blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. If this be inconsistent with our probation, I see not why the doctrine of the saints' perseverance is not equally inconsistent with it. If any one is disposed to maintain that for us to have any judgment or belief in regard to our final perseverance, is inconsistent with a state of probation, all I can say is, that his views of probation are very inconsistent with my own, and so far as I

understand, with those of the Church of God.

Again, there is a very high and important sense in which every moral being will remain on probation to all eternity. While under the moral government of God, obedience must for ever remain a condition of the favor of God. And the fact of continued obedience will for ever depend on the faithfulness and grace of God; and the only knowledge we can ever have of this fact, either in heaven or on earth, must be founded upon the faithfulness and truth of God.

Again, if it were true, that entering upon a state of permanent sanctification in this life, were, in some sense, an end of our probation, that would be no objection to the doctrine; for there is a sense in which probation often ends long before the termination of this life. Where, for example, a person has committed the unpardonable sin, or where from any cause, God has given up sinners to fill up the measure of their iniquity, withdrawing for ever His Holy Spirit from them, and sealed them over to eternal death; this, in a very important sense, is the end of their probation, and they are as sure of hell as if they were already there.

So on the other hand, when a person has received, after that he believes, the ensembling of the Spirit unto the day of redemption, as an earnest of his inheritance, he may and is bound to regard this as a solemn pledge on the part of God, of his final perseverance and salvation, and as no longer leaving the final question of his destiny in doubt.

Now it should be remembered, that in both these cases the result depends upon the exercise of the agency of the creature. In the case of the sinner given up of God, it is certain that he will not repent, though his impenitence is voluntary and by no means a thing naturally necessary. So on the other hand the perseverance of the saints is certain though not necessary. If in either case there should be a radical change of character the result would differ accordingly.

- 17. Again, while it is admitted by some that entire sanctification in this life is attainable, yet it is denied that there is any certainty that it will be attained by any one before death. For, it is said, that as all the promises of entire sanctification are conditioned upon faith, they therefore secure the entire sanctification of no one. To this I reply:

That all the promises of salvation in the Bible are conditioned upon faith and repentance, and therefore it does not follow on this principle, that any person ever will be saved. What does all this arguing prove? The fact is that while the promises both of salvation and sanctification, are conditioned upon faith as it respects individuals; yet to Christ and to the Church as a body, as I have already shown, these promises are unconditional. With respect to the salvation of sinners, it is promised that Christ shall have a seed to serve Him, and the Bible abounds with numerous promises, both to Christ and the Church, that secure without condition, as it regards them, the salvation of great multitudes of sinners.

So the promises that the Church as a body, at some period of her earthly history, shall be entirely sanctified, are, as it regards the Church, unconditional. But, as I have already shown, as it respects individuals, the fulfillment of these promises must depend upon the exercise of faith. Both in the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of Christians, God is abundantly pledged to bring about the salvation of the one and the sanctification of the other, to the extent of His promises. But as it respects individuals, no one can claim the fulfillment of these promises without complying with the conditions.

These are the principal objections that have occurred to my mind, or that have, so far as I know, been urged by others. There may be and doubtless are others, of greater or less plausibility, to which I may have occasion to refer hereafter. Lest I should be tedious, these must suffice for the present.

## LECTURE VIII.

April 8, 1840

### **SANCTIFICATION- No. 8**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

#### **VIII. I am next to show when entire sanctification is attainable.**

- 1. The blessing of entire sanctification is promised to Christians. The promises in--

Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Ezek. 36:25-27: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

1 Thess. 5:23, 24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

Eph. 1:13: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

These and many others show that the promise is made to those who have some degree of faith, i.e. who have been regenerated. In the last it is said, "We are sealed after that we believe."

- 2. Faith is always the expressed or implied condition of the promises. It has been supposed that the promise in Jer. 31, together with other kindred promises, are absolute in such a sense as to have no condition whatever. To this it may be replied, that the things which they promise are of such a nature as that they cannot possibly be received but by faith. The law of love cannot possibly be written in the heart, but through the faith which works by love. Therefore from necessity this promise, as well as all other promises of spiritual blessings, is conditioned upon faith in us. Should it be said that the promise to write the law in our hearts, includes the doing of all that which is essential to its fulfillment, and that therefore a promise to beget love is virtually also a promise to produce faith, I reply, that in some sense this is true. A promise to secure an end is virtually a promise to secure the right use of the means necessary to that end. But this is as far as possible from excluding our own agency and responsibility. When Paul had declared, that not a hair of any man's head on board the ship should perish, this did not exclude the necessity of the sailors remaining on board. For he afterwards informed them, "except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." Now it is true that in a very important sense, the promise that the hair of no man's head should perish, implied that God would secure the use of the requisite means to preserve them. Yet who would infer from this that that promise was not conditioned upon the sailors remaining on board, and the right use of the voluntary agency of Paul and all the rest on board to preserve themselves. So it should be remembered, that the promises, to create a new heart and a new spirit--to make a new covenant with the house of Israel--and to write the law in their hearts--are certainly and necessarily conditioned upon the faith of every one who would receive their fulfillment.
- 3. This state is attainable on the ground of natural ability at any time. If this state were not attainable on the ground of natural ability, it would not be required, and its absence would not be sin. But it has been doubted whether the work of entire sanctification is such, in its own nature, that it can be accomplished at once. To this I reply:
  - (1.) If it cannot be instantly accomplished, it would not be instantly required.
  - (2.) If it were not, in its own nature, capable of being attained at once, the non-attaining it at once would not be sin. All that would be required would be to press forward as fast as we could.

- (3.) But in this case the pressing forward would be a sinless state, because it would be all that could be required. So that we should possess at once, what according to the supposition, is naturally impossible, i.e. a state of entire sanctification.
- (4.) I have already shown that provision is made against every temptation. And as temptation, under some form, is the cause of all sin, if sufficient provision is made against all present and future temptation, it follows that a state of entire sanctification is attainable at once.
- 4. Full faith in the word and promises of God, naturally, and certainly, and immediately produces a state of entire sanctification. Let it be understood that by faith, I mean--
  - (1.) A realization of the truth and meaning of the Bible.
  - (2.) A laying hold upon all those truths upon which this state of mind depends, especially a full realization and belief of the sacred record God has given of His Son, "that his blood cleanseth us from all sin." It is easy to see that the realization and belief of the infinite love of God, as manifested in Christ Jesus, would have a tendency to fill the mind with unutterable and constant love to God--to annihilate selfishness--and beget the most cordial and perfect love to man. This result is instantaneous on the exercise of faith, and in this sense sanctification is an instantaneous work.
- 5. God is able to produce entire sanctification in any soul, when he is pleased to do so.

This appears to be plainly taught by Christ, when he spoke of the ability of God to save the rich. He asserts that their salvation is more difficult "than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." And when the disciples expressed their astonishment, He replied, that "with God all things are possible." Now this seems to be a case in point. To sanctify the rich is the only difficulty in the way of their salvation. And Christ has asserted, that God is able not only to sanctify them, but that "all things are possible with Him," i.e. that there is no limit to His ability in this respect.

Eph. 3:20, proved the same point. Here the Apostle asserts that God is able to do "abundantly above all that we ask and above all that we think," exceedingly abundantly, &c. Now we can both think of and ask for the blessing of entire, and permanent, and instantaneous sanctification, and if this passage of scripture is true God is able to grant it.

That God is able not only to produce present but also to confirm us in a state of perpetual sanctification, is plain from many other passages of scripture. Jude 24: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Upon this passage, I remark:

- (1.) Here it is asserted, that God is able to keep us from falling.
- (2.) To present us faultless before the presence of His glory.

- (3.) To keep us and present us faultless, is to preserve us in a state of permanent sanctification. And this it is declared He is able to do.

To this it has been objected that moral government implies the power to resist every degree of motive. This I most fully admit. But it is one thing to have the power thus to resist, and quite another thing to use that power. God certainly knew when he created moral agents to what extent, under their circumstances, they would actually exercise their powers of resistance, and therefore whether He could sanctify and save them or not. As a matter of fact, He has overcome the voluntary resistance of all who are converted. And if He has broken down their enmity, and so far subdued them, is it incredible that He should be able wholly to sanctify them, and preserve them blameless?

### **IX. I am to show how entire sanctification is attainable.**

- 1. A state of entire sanctification can never be attained by an indifferent waiting God's time.
- 2. Nor by any works of law, or works of any kind performed in your own strength, irrespective of the grace of God. By this I do not mean that were you disposed to exert your natural powers aright, you could not at once attain to this state in the exercise of your natural strength. But I do mean, that as you are wholly indisposed to use your natural powers aright without the grace of God, no efforts that you will actually make in your own strength or independent of his grace, will ever result in your entire sanctification.
- 3. Not by any direct efforts to feel right. Many spend their time in vain efforts to force themselves into a right state of feeling. Now it should be for ever understood, that neither faith, love, nor repentance, nor any other right feeling is ever the result of a direct effort to put forth those exercises. But on the contrary, they are the spontaneous actings of the mind when it has under its direct and deep consideration the objects of faith, and love, and repentance. By spontaneous, I do not mean involuntary. They are the voluntary and the most easy & natural states of mind possible under such circumstances. So far from its requiring an effort to put them forth, it would rather require an effort to prevent them, when the mind is intensely considering those objects & considerations which have a natural tendency to produce them. This is so true that when persons are in the exercise of such affections, they feel no difficulty at all in their exercise, but wonder how any one can help feeling as they do. It seems to them so natural, so easy, and I may say, so almost unavoidable, that they often feel and express astonishment that any one should find it difficult to love, believe, or repent. The course that many persons take on the subject of religion has often appeared wonderful to me. They make themselves, their own state and interests, the central point, around which their own minds are continually revolving. Their selfishness is so great, that their own interests, happiness, and salvation, fill their whole field of vision. And with their thoughts and anxieties, and whole souls clustering around their own salvation, they complain of a hard heart--that they cannot love God--that they do not repent, and cannot believe. Being conscious that they do not feel right, they are the most concerned about themselves, which concern but increases their embarrassment and the difficulty of exercising right affections. The deeper they feel the more they try to feel--the greater efforts they make to feel without success, the more they are alarmed and discouraged, the more are they confirmed in their selfishness, and the more are their thoughts glued to their

own interests, and they are of course at a greater and greater distance from any right state of feeling. And thus their selfish anxieties beget ineffectual efforts, and ineffectual efforts but deepen their anxieties. And if in this state, death should appear in a visible form before them, or the last trumpet sound, and they should be summoned to the solemn Judgment, it would but increase their distraction, confirm and almost give omnipotence to their selfishness, and render their sanctification morally impossible.

- 4. Not by any efforts to obtain grace by works. In my lecture on Faith, in the last volume of the Evangelist, I said the following things:
  - (1.) Should the question be proposed to a Jew, "What shall I do that I may work the works of God?"--in other words, how shall I obtain a state of entire obedience to the law of God, or entire sanctification?--he would answer, keep the law, both moral and ceremonial, i.e. keep the commandments.
  - (2.) To the same inquiry an Arminian would answer, improve common grace, and you will obtain converting grace, i.e. use the means of grace, according to the best light you have, and you will obtain the grace of salvation. In this answer it is not supposed, that the inquirer already has faith, and is using the means of grace in faith; but that he is in a state of impenitency, and is inquiring after converting grace. The answer, therefore, amounts to this: you must get converting grace by your impenitent works; you must become holy by your hypocrisy; you must work out sanctification by sin.
  - (3.) To this question, most professed Calvinists would make in substance the same reply. They would reject the language, while they retained the idea. Their direction would imply, either that the inquirer already has faith, or that he must perform some works to obtain it, i.e. to obtain grace by works.

Neither an Arminian, nor a Calvinist would formally direct the inquirer to the law, as the ground of justification. But nearly the whole Church would give directions that would amount to the same thing. Their answer would be a legal, and not a gospel answer. For whatever answer is given to this question, that does not distinctly recognize faith, as the foundation of all virtue in sinners, is legal. Unless the inquirer is made to understand, that this is the first, grand, fundamental duty, without the performance of which all virtue, all giving up of sin, all acceptable obedience, is impossible, he is misdirected. He is led to believe that it is possible to please God without faith; and to obtain grace by works of law. There are but two kinds of works--works of law, and works of faith. Now if the inquirer has not the "faith that works by love," to set him upon any course of works to get it, is certainly to get faith by works of the law. Whatever is said to him that does not clearly convey the truth, that both justification and sanctification are by faith, without works of law, is law, and not gospel. Nothing before, or without faith, can possibly be done by the unbeliever, but works of law. His first duty, therefore, is faith; and every attempt to obtain faith by unbelieving works, is to lay works at the foundation, and make grace a result. It is the direct opposite of gospel truth.

Take facts as they arise in every day's experience, to show that what I have stated is true

of almost all professors and non-professors. Whenever a sinner begins in good earnest to agitate the question, "what shall I do to be saved?" he resolves as a first duty, to break off from his sins, i.e. in unbelief. Of course, his reformation is only outward. He determines to do better--to reform in this, that, and the other thing, and thus prepare himself to be converted. He does not expect to be saved without grace, and faith, but he attempts to get grace by works of law.

The same is true of multitudes of anxious Christians, who are inquiring what they shall do to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. They overlook the facts, that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith," that it is with "the shield of faith" that they are "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." They ask why am I overcome by sin? why can I not get above its power? why am I thus the slave of my appetites and passions, and the sport of the devil? They cast about for the cause of all this spiritual wretchedness and death. At one time, they think they have discovered it in the neglect of one duty; and at another time, in the neglect of another. Sometimes, they imagine they have found the cause to lie in yielding to one sin, and sometimes in yielding to another. They put forth efforts in this direction, and in that direction, and patch up their righteousness on one side, while they make a rent in the other side. Thus they spend years, in running around in a circle, and making dams of sand across the current of their own corruptions. Instead of at once purifying their hearts by faith, they are engaged in trying to arrest the overflowing of its bitter waters. Why do I sin? they inquire; and casting about for the cause, they come to the sage conclusion, it is because I neglect such a duty, i.e. because I do sin. But how shall I get rid of sin? Answer: by doing my duty, that is, by ceasing from sin. Now the real inquiry is, why do they neglect their duty? Why do they commit sin at all? where is the foundation of all this mischief? Will it be replied, the foundation of all this wickedness is in the corruption of our nature--in the wickedness of the heart--in the strength of our evil propensities and habits? But all this only brings us back to the real inquiry again--How are this corrupt nature, this wicked heart, and these sinful habits, to be overcome? I answer, by faith alone. No works of law have the least tendency to overcome our sins; but rather confirm the soul in self-righteousness and unbelief.

The great and fundamental sin, which is at the foundation of all other sin, is unbelief. The first thing is, to give up that--to believe the word of God. There is no breaking off from one sin without this. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

Thus we see, that the backslider and convicted sinner, when agonizing to overcome sin, will almost always betake themselves to works of law, to obtain faith. They will fast, and pray, and read, and struggle, and outwardly reform, and thus endeavor to obtain grace. Now all this is in vain and wrong. Do you ask, shall we not fast, and pray, and read, and struggle? Shall we do nothing--but sit down in Antinomian security and inaction? I answer, you must do all that God commands you to do; but begin where He tells you to begin, and do it in the manner in which He commands you to do it; i.e. in the exercise of that faith that works by love. Purify your hearts by faith. Believe in the Son of God. And



say not in your heart, "who shall ascend up into heaven, i.e. to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep, i.e. to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach."

Now these facts show, that even under the gospel, almost all professors of religion, while they reject the Jewish notion of justification by works of the law, have after all adopted a ruinous substitute for it, and suppose that, in some way they are to obtain grace by their works.

- 5. A state of entire sanctification cannot be attained by attempting to copy the experience of others. It is very common for convicted sinners, or for Christians inquiring after entire sanctification, in their blindness to ask others to relate their experience, to mark minutely the detail of all their exercises, and then set themselves to pray for and make direct efforts to attain the same class of exercises. Not seeming to understand that they can no more exercise feelings in the detail like others, than they can look like others. Human experiences differ as human countenances differ. The whole history of a man's former state of mind, comes in of course to modify his present and future exercises. So that the precise train of affections which may be requisite in your case, and which will actually occur in your case, if you are ever sanctified, will not, in all their detail, coincide with the exercises of any other human being. It is of vast importance for you to understand, that you can be no copyist in any true religious experience; and that you are in great danger of being deceived by Satan, whenever you attempt to copy the experience of others. I beseech you, therefore to cease from praying for or trying to obtain the precise experience of any uninspired person, whatever. All truly Christian experiences are, like human countenances, in their outline, so much alike as to be readily known as the lineaments of the religion of Jesus Christ. But no farther than this are they alike, any more than human countenances are alike.
- 6. Not by waiting to make preparations before you come into this state. Observe that the thing about which you are inquiring is a state of entire consecration to God. Now do not imagine that this state of mind must be prefaced by a long introduction of preparatory exercises. It is common for persons when inquiring upon this subject with earnestness, to think themselves hindered in their progress by a want of this or that or the other exercise or state of mind. They look every where else but at the real difficulty. They assign any other and every other but the true reason for their not being already in a state of sanctification.
- 7. Not by attending meetings, asking the prayers of other Christians, or depending in any way upon the means of getting into this state. By this I do not intend to say that means are unnecessary, or that it is not through the instrumentality of truth, that this state of mind is induced. But I do mean that while you are depending upon any instrumentality whatever, your mind is directed from the real point before you, and you are never likely to make this attainment.
- 8. Not by waiting for any particular views of Christ. When persons, in the state of mind of which I have been speaking, hear those who live in faith, describe their views of Christ, they say, "O, if I had such views, I could believe; I must have these, before I can believe." Now you

should understand that these views are the result and effect of faith. These views of which you speak, are those which faith discovers in those passages of Scripture which describe Christ. Faith apprehends the meaning of those passages, and sees in them these very things which you expect to see, before you exercise faith, and which you imagine would produce it. Take hold, then, on the simple promise of God. Take God at His word. Believe that he means just what He says. And this will at once bring you into the state of mind, after which you inquire.

- 9. Not in any way which you may mark out for yourself. Persons in an inquiring state are very apt, without seeming to be aware of it, to send imagination on before them, to stake out the way, and set up a flag where they intend to come out. They expect to be thus and thus exercised--to have such and such peculiar views and feelings, when they have attained their object. Now there probably never was a person who did not find himself disappointed in these respects. God says, "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not. I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." This suffering your imagination to make out your path is a great hindrance to you, as it sets you upon making many fruitless, and worse than fruitless, attempts to attain this imaginary state of mind--wastes much of your time--exhausts much of the energies of your mind--and greatly wearies the patience and grieves the Spirit of God. While He is trying to lead you right to the point, you are hauling off from the course, and insisting that this which your imagination has marked out is the way, instead of that in which He is trying to lead you. And thus in your pride and ignorance you are causing much delay, and abusing the long suffering of God. He says, "This is the way, walk ye in it." But you say no. This is the way. And thus you stand and parley and banter, while you are every moment in danger of grieving the Spirit of God away from you, and of losing your soul.
- 10. Not in any manner, or at any time, or place, upon which you may in your own mind lay any stress. If there is any thing in your imagination that has fixed definitely upon any particular manner, time or place, or circumstances, you will in all probability either be deceived by the devil, or entirely disappointed in the result. You will find that in all these particular items on which you had laid any stress, that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God--that your ways are not His ways, not your thoughts His thoughts. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than your ways, and His thoughts than your thoughts. But,
- 11. This state is to be attained by faith alone. Let it be forever remembered, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," and "whatever is not of faith, is sin."

Both justification and sanctification are by faith alone. Rom. 3:30: "Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith;" and 5:1: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Also, 9:30, 31: "What shall we say then? that the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law."

That you may clearly understand this part of the subject, I will quote again from my lecture in

the last Vol. the elements that constitute saving faith.

- (1.) The first element of saving faith is a realizing sense of the truth of the Bible. But this is not alone saving faith, for Satan has this realizing sense of truth, which makes him tremble.
- (2.) But a second element in saving faith is the consent of the heart or will to the truth perceived by the intellect. It is a cordial trust or resting of the mind in those truths, and a yielding up of the whole being to their influence. Now it is easy to see, that without the consent of the will, these can be nothing but an outward obedience to God. A wife, without confidence in her husband, can do nothing more than perform outwardly her duty to him. It is a contradiction to say that without confidence, she can perform her duty from the heart. The same is true of parental and all other governments. Works of law may be performed without faith; i.e. we may serve from fear or hope, or some selfish consideration; but without the confidence that works by love, obedience from the heart is naturally impossible. Nay, the very terms, obedience from the heart without love, are a contradiction.
- (3.) This is the most simple and rational state of mind conceivable. It is that state of mind for which very young children are so remarkable. Before they have been taught to distrust by the experience of human depravity, they seem to know nothing of unbelief. They are so simple and honest, that they feel entire confidence in those around them. It is merely a trust in testimony, a resting of the heart in truths perceived by the intellect, a natural yielding of the voluntary powers to the testimony of God.
- (4.) This state of mind is spontaneous. It is not, as I have said, the result of an effort to believe, but the natural resting or reposing of the mind in the truth of God. And when the soul believes, all that it can say, is that "while I mused the fire burned," when I thought on the truth to be believed, ere I was aware, I found myself believing.--As I have already said, I do not mean that this is an involuntary state of mind, but that it is voluntary in so high a sense as not to be the result of effort, but the joyful, and natural, and easy yielding up the mind to the influence of truth.
- (5.) Faith discovers the real meaning, and apprehends the fulness of those passages that describe Christ. Faith therefore presents Christ to the mind not as at a distance, but as near, not as enveloped in clouds; but in those passages that describe Him, is beheld a fulness, and a glory, and a surpassing loveliness that overpowers and melts the soul.
- (6.) The truths to be believed, in order to induce this state of mind, are those which comprise "the record that God hath given of His Son." The mind needs to apprehend God in Christ. To be like God, we must know what He is. To be led to a spontaneous consecration of all to Him, our selfishness must be overcome by a knowledge of what God is. And this knowledge is to be obtained only by seeing God in Christ. For this very purpose God took to Himself human nature, that He might reveal Himself to the sons of men, and thus possess their minds of a true knowledge of His character.

- o (7.) The natural, and certain effect of their knowing God, is a state of entire consecration to Him. I have said that while individuals are taken up with contemplating themselves, their own characters, dangers, and troubles, they cannot be sanctified, because there is no tendency in such considerations to produce this state. They may dwell upon their own misery, or their wretchedness to all eternity, without finding it possible to consecrate themselves to God, for what is there in such considerations that can in any way produce such a result. It is a consideration of the infinite excellence of Christ's character, and this alone that can inspire faith or love. If, therefore, you ever expect to trust in God, and love Him with all your heart, you must acquaint yourselves with the reasons for thus loving and trusting Him. You must know God. You must have the true knowledge of God. God, and not yourselves, must be the object of your thoughts. Cease then, I beseech you, to expect to be sanctified by any works of your own, or any direct efforts to feel or do more or less, and remember "that faith cometh by hearing." In other words to understand and believe the record that God hath given of His Son, will at once give you an experimental acquaintance with the truth, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

The New and Old dispensations differ in two respects.

- (a) The New, is a fuller and more perfect revelation of Christ, or of those things that are indispensable to sanctification.
- (b) There is a vastly greater amount of the Holy Spirit's influences exerted under this dispensation. The Old made nothing perfect, because of the obscure nature of the revelation of Christ, and because there was such a want of divine influence as fully to possess the mind of the truths indispensable to sanctification. The mind must know enough of God to slay selfishness, and without this, neither love or sanctification is possible. The New, blessed be God, with the influences of the Holy Spirit, have brought us into the clear sunlight, and so revealed God as to overcome sin.

## LECTURE IX.

April 22, 1840

### **SANCTIFICATION- No. 9**

by the Rev. Charles G. Finney

Text.--1 Thess. 5:23-24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it."

In concluding the series of discourses upon this text, I would remark:

- 1. That it is useless to speculate upon any supposed distinction that might have been in the

Apostle's mind between the soul and spirit of man. I understand the prayer of the Apostle to be for the entire consecration of the whole being to the service of God. I need not dwell with any more particularity upon the text, except it be to mention some things which I suppose are implied in the entire sanctification of the body.

- (1.) I understand the sanctification of the body to imply the entire consecration, by the soul, of all its members to the service of God. The body is to be regarded merely as the instrument of the soul through which it manifests itself, and by which it fulfills its desires.
- (2.) The entire sanctification of the body implies also the entire consecration of all its appetites and passions to the service of God, i.e. that all its appetites shall be used only for the purposes for which they were designed, not to be the masters, but the servants of the soul, not to lead the soul away from God, but to subserve the highest interests of the physical organization.
- (3.) It implies the necessity of keeping the body under, and bringing it into subjection--that no appetite or passion of the body is to be indulged merely for the sake of the indulgence--that no appetite or passion is to be at any time consulted or its indulgence allowed but for the glory of God, to answer the ends of our being, and to render us in the highest degree useful. The grand error of mankind is, that the soul has been debased even to be the slave of the body, that appetite and passion have ruled, that the "fleshly mind which is enmity against God," has been suffered to become the law of the soul, and hence the Apostle complains that he saw "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death,; which was in his members. Hence also, it is said that "if ye live after the flesh ye shall die," that "to mind the flesh is enmity with God," that " the minding of the flesh is death," "he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." In short it is every where in the Bible expressly taught, that one great error and sin of mankind is the indulgence of the flesh. Now the entire sanctification of the body implies the denial of the lusts of the flesh, that "we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof," that the appetites and passions be restrained and entirely subjugated to the highest interests and perfection of the soul, and to the glory of God. The highest sense in which the body may be sanctified in this life implies:
  - (a) The strictest temperance in all things. By temperance I mean the moderate use of things that are useful, and total abstinence from things that are pernicious.
  - (b) It implies also the utter denial of all the artificial appetites of the body. By artificial appetites I mean all those appetites that are not natural to man previous to all depravity of the system by any kind of abuse or violation of its laws. Among the artificial appetites are all those hankerings after various poisons, narcotics, and innutricious [sic.] stimulants that are in almost universal use, such as tobacco, tea, coffee, and the like. All such substances are utterly inconsistent with perfect temperance--are worse than useless, and produce only a temporary excitement, at the expense of certain and permanent debility. They deceive mankind on the same

principle that alcohol has so long deceived men, and though not to the same degree injurious and inconsistent with the highest well being of the body and soul; yet they are as really so; and therefore utterly unlawful. And nothing but ignorance, can prevent their use in any instance as an article of diet from being sin; and when the means of knowledge are at hand, this ignorance itself becomes sin.

- (c) Temperance implies a knowledge of, and compliance with, all the laws of our physical system. There is scarcely any branch of knowledge more important to mankind than a knowledge of the structure and laws of their own being. Nor is there scarcely any subject, upon which men are so generally and so shamefully ignorant. It seems not at all to be known by mankind in general, or even suspected, that everything about their bodies is regulated by laws, as certain as the law of gravitation; and that a perfect knowledge of and conformity of those laws, would render permanent health as certain as the motion of the planets. The world is full of disease and premature death, and these things are spoken of as mysterious providences of God, without ever so much as dreaming, that they are the natural and certain results of the most outrageous and reckless violations of the laws of the human constitution.
  
- (d) Temperance in all things implies correct dietetic and other habits in respect to exercise and rest. And in short, such obedience in all respects to the physiological laws of the constitution as to promote in the highest degree its physical perfection, and thus preserve it in a state in which it will be in the highest degree capable of being used by the soul, to fulfill all the will of God. There are no doubt, occasions on which the bodily strength and the body itself may be sanctified to the interests of the soul, and of the Redeemer's kingdom--cases in which the violation of physical law may be justifiable and even a duty, where the kingdom of Christ demands the sacrifice. Christ gave up His body a sacrifice. The Apostles and Martyrs gave up theirs. And in every age multitudes have given themselves up to labors for the kingdom of Christ, that have soon ended their mortal lives. This is not inconsistent with the highest instances of such consecration. But where the circumstances do not demand it, the sanctification of the body, implies that its strength shall not be exhausted, or any of its powers debilitated or injured, by any neglect of exercise, or by any overworking of its organs, or by any violation of its laws whatever. It implies the utmost regularity in all our habits of eating, drinking, sleeping, labor, rest, exercise, and in short a strictly religious regard to all those things that can contribute to our highest perfection of body and soul. Can a glutton, who is stupefied two or three times a day with his food, be entirely consecrated, either body or soul to God? Certainly not. His table is a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block to him. Can an epicure, whose dainty palate loathes every correctly prepared article of diet, and who demands that every meal should be prepared with seasonings and condiments highly injurious to the health of his body and the well-being of his soul, can he be in a state of entire consecration to God? No! surely. His "God is his belly." His "glory is in his shame." He "minds earthly things," and an Apostle would tell him, "even weeping, that his end is destruction."

It is appalling to see the various forms of disease and wretchedness with which mankind are cursed on account of their wanton disregard of the laws of their being. The highest power of the human mind can never be developed, nor its highest perfection attained, in a diseased body; and probably scarcely a single member of the human family in their present state, has any thing like perfect health. Many suppose themselves to be perfectly healthy, simply because they never saw a person who had perfect health, and also because they do not know enough of themselves to know that many of their organs may be fatally diseased without their being conscious of it.

The influence of dietetic and other habits upon the health of the body is known to but a very limited extent among mankind, and far less is it understood that whatever affects the body, inevitably affects the mind, and that the temper and spirit of a man are in a great measure modified by the state of his health. It is known to some extent that an acid stomach begets fretfulness, and that certain nervous diseases, as they are called, greatly affect the mind. But it is not so generally known as it ought to be, that all our dietetic and other physiological habits have a powerful influence in forming and molding our moral character. Not necessarily but by way of temptation, acting on the mind through our bodily organs, all stimulants and every thing injurious to the body act most perniciously upon the mind. Let me say therefore, beloved, in one word, as I cannot dwell upon this subject longer, that if you would expect the sanctification of body, soul, and spirit, you must acquaint yourselves with the true principles of temperance and physiological reform, and most religiously conform yourself to them not only in the aggregate but in the detail.

But I have already protracted the discussion of this subject so far that I will not add more at present, except to conclude what I have to say with several brief

## **REMARKS.**

1. There is an importance to be attached to the sanctification of the body, of which very few persons appear to be aware. Indeed unless the bodily appetites and powers be consecrated to the service of God--unless we learn to eat, and drink, and sleep, and wake, and labor, and rest, for the glory of God, entire sanctification is out of the question.
2. It is plain, that very few persons are aware of the great influence which their bodies have over their minds, and of the indispensable necessity of bringing their bodies under and bringing them into subjection.
3. Few people seem to keep the fact steadily in view, that unless their bodies be rightly managed, they will be so fierce and overpowering a source of temptation to the mind, as inevitably to lead it into sin. If they indulge themselves in a stimulating diet, and in the use of those condiments that irritate and rasp the nervous system, their bodies will be of course and of necessity the source of powerful and incessant temptation to evil tempers and vile affections. If persons were aware of the great influence

which the body has over the mind, they would realize that they cannot be too careful to preserve the nervous system from the influence of every improper article of food or drink, and preserve that system as they would the apple of their eye, from every influence that could impair its functions.

4. No one who has opportunity to acquire information in regard to the laws of life and health, and the best means of sanctifying the whole spirit, soul, and body, can be guiltless if he neglect these means of knowledge. Every man is bound to make the structure and laws of both body and mind the subject of as thorough investigation as his circumstances will permit, to inform himself in regard to what are the true principles of perfect temperance, and in what way the most can be made of all his powers of body and mind for the glory of God.

5. From what has been said in these discourses, the reason why the Church has not been entirely sanctified is very obvious. As a body the Church has not believed that such a state was attainable in this life. And this is a sufficient reason, and indeed the best of all reasons for her not having attained it.

6. From what has been said, it is easy to see that the true question in regard to entire sanctification in this life, is its attainability, as a matter of fact. Some have thought the proper question to be, are Christians entirely sanctified in this life? Now certainly this is not the question that needs to be discussed. Suppose it be fully granted that they are not; this fact is sufficiently accounted for, by the consideration that they do not know it, or believe it to be attainable in this life. If they believed it to be attainable, it might no longer be true that they do not attain it. But if provision really is made for this attainment, it amounts to nothing, unless it be recognized and believed. The thing then needed is to bring the Church to see and believe, that this is her high privilege and her duty. It is not enough to say that it is attainable, simply on the ground of natural ability. This is as true of the devil, and of the lost in hell, as of men in this world. But unless grace has put this attainment so within our reach, as that it may be aimed at with the reasonable prospect of success, there is, as a matter of fact, no more provision for our entire sanctification in this life than for the devil's. It seems to be trifling with mankind, merely to maintain the attainability of this state on the ground of natural ability only. The real question is, has grace brought this attainment so within our reach, that we may reasonably expect to experience it in this life? It is admitted, that on the ground of natural ability both wicked men and devils have the power to be entirely holy. But it is also admitted, that their indisposition to use this power aright is so complete, that as a matter of fact, they never will use this power aright, unless influenced to do so by the grace of God. I insist, therefore, that the real question is, whether the provisions of the gospel are such, that, did the Church fully understand and lay hold upon the proffered grace, she might as a matter of fact attain this state?

7. We see how irrelevant and absurd the objection is, that as a matter of fact the Church has not attained this state, and therefore it is not attainable. Why, if they have not understood it to be attainable, it no more proves its unattainableness, than the fact that the heathen have not embraced the gospel proves that they will not when they know it.

8. You see the necessity of fully preaching and insisting upon this doctrine, and of calling it by its true scriptural name. It is astonishing to see to what an extent, there is a tendency among men to avoid the use of scriptural language, and cleave to the language of such men as Edwards, and other great and



good divines. They object to the terms perfection and entire sanctification, and prefer to use the terms entire consecration, and other such terms as have been common in the Church.

Now I would by no means contend about the use of words; but still, it does appear to me, to be of great importance, that we use scripture language and insist upon men being "perfect as their Father in Heaven is perfect," and being "sanctified wholly body, soul, and spirit." This appears to me to be of the most importance for this reason, that if we use the language to which the Church has been accustomed upon this subject, she will as she has done, misunderstand us, and will not get before her mind that which we really mean. That this is so is manifest from the fact that the great mass of the Church will express alarm at the use of the terms perfection and entire sanctification, who will neither express or feel any such alarm if we speak of entire consecration. This demonstrates, that they do not, by any means, understand these terms as meaning the same thing. And although I understand them as meaning precisely the same thing, yet I find myself obliged to use the terms perfection and entire sanctification, to possess their minds of my real meaning. This is Bible language. It is unobjectionable language. And inasmuch as the Church understand entire consecration to mean something less than entire sanctification or Christian perfection, it does seem to me of great importance, that ministers should use a phraseology which will call the attention of the Church to the real doctrine of the Bible upon this subject. And I would submit the question with great humility to my beloved brethren in the ministry, whether they are not aware, that Christians have entirely too low an idea of what is implied in entire consecration, and whether it is not useful and best to adopt a phraseology in addressing them that shall call their attention to the real meaning of the words which they use?

9. Young converts have not been allowed so much as to indulge the thought that they could live even for a day wholly without sin. They have as a general thing no more been taught to expect to live even for a day without sin, than they have been taught to expect immediate translation, soul and body, to Heaven. Of course they have not known that there was any other way, than to go on in sin, and however shocking and distressing the necessity has appeared to them in the ardor of their first love, still they have looked upon it as the unalterable fact, that to be in a great measure in bondage to sin was a thing of course while they live in this world. Now with such an orthodoxy as this, with the conviction in the Church and ministry so ripe, settled, and universal, that the utmost that the grace of God can do for men in this world is to bring them to repentance and to leave them to live and die in a state of sinning and repenting, is it at all wonderful that the state of religion should be as it really has been?

10. Christ has been in a great measure lost sight of in some of His most important relations to mankind. He has been known and preached as a pardoning, justifying Savior, but as an actually indwelling and reigning Savior in the heart, He has been but little known. I was struck with a remark, a few years since, of a brother whom I have from that time greatly loved, who had been for a long time in a desponding state of mind, borne down with a great sense of his own vileness, but seeing no way of escape. At an evening meeting the Lord so revealed Himself to him as entirely to overcome the strength of his body, and his brethren were obliged to carry him home. The next time I saw him, he exclaimed to me with a pathos I shall never forget, "Brother Finney, the Church have buried the Savior." Now it is no doubt true, that the Church has become awfully alienated from Christ--has in a great measure lost a knowledge of what He is and ought to be to her--and a great many of her members I have good reason to know, in different parts of the country, are saying with deep and

overpowering emotion, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him."

11. With all her orthodoxy, the Church has been for a long time much nearer to Unitarianism than she has imagined. This remark may shock some of my readers, and you may think it savors of censoriousness. But, beloved, I am sure it is said in no such spirit. These are "the words of truth and soberness." So little has been known of Christ, that, if I am not entirely mistaken, there are multitudes in the orthodox churches, who do not know Christ, and who in heart are Unitarians, while in theory they are orthodox.

I have been, within the last two or three years, deeply impressed with the fact, that so many professors of religion are coming to the ripe conviction that they never knew Christ. There have been in this place almost continual developments of this fact, and I doubt whether there is a minister in the land who will present Christ as the gospel presents Him, in all the fulness of His official relations to mankind, who will not be struck and agonized with developments that will assure him that the great mass of professors of religion do not know the Savior. It has been to my own mind a painful and a serious question, what I ought to think of the spiritual state of those who know so little of the blessed Jesus. That none of them have been converted, I dare not say. And yet, that they have been converted, I am afraid to say. I would not for the world "quench the smoking flax or break the bruised reed," or say any thing to stumble or weaken the feeblest lamb of Christ; and yet my heart is sore pained, my soul is sick; my bowels of compassion yearn over the Church of the blessed God. O, the dear Church of Christ! What does she know in her present state of gospel rest, of that "great and perfect peace they have whose minds are stayed on God"?

12. If I am not mistaken, there is an extensive feeling among Christians and ministers, that much is not, that ought to be known and may be known of the Savior. Many are beginning to find that the Savior is to them "as a root out of dry ground, having neither form or comeliness;" that the gospel which they preach and hear is not to them "the power of God unto salvation" from sin; that it is not to them "glad tidings of great joy;" that it is not to them a peace-giving gospel; and many are feeling that if Christ has done for them, all that His grace is able to do in this life, that the plan of salvation is sadly defective, that Christ is not after all a Savior suited to their necessities--that the religion which they have is not suited to the world in which they live--that it does not, cannot make them free; but leaves them in a state of perpetual bondage. Their souls are agonized and tossed to and fro without a resting place. Multitudes also are beginning to see that there are many passages, both in the Old and New Testaments, which they do not understand; that the promises seem to mean much more than they have ever realized, and that the gospel and the plan of salvation as a whole, must be something very different from that which they have as yet apprehended. There are great multitudes all over the country, who are inquiring more earnestly than ever before, after a knowledge of that Jesus who is to save His people from their sins.

A fact was related in my hearing, a short time since, that illustrates, in an affecting manner, the agonizing state of mind in which many Christians are, in regard to the present state of many of the ministers of Christ. I had the statement from the brother himself, who was the subject of his narrative. A sister in the church to which he preached became so sensible that he did not know Christ, as he ought to know Him, that she was full of unutterable agony, and on one occasion, after he had been preaching, fell down at his feet with tears and strong beseechings, that he would exercise faith in

Christ. At another time she was so impressed with a sense of his deficiency in this respect, as a minister, that she addressed him in the deepest anguish of her soul, crying out-- "O I shall die, I shall certainly die, unless you will receive Christ as a full Savior," and attempting to approach him, she sunk down helpless, overcome with agony and travail of soul, at his feet.

There is manifestly a great struggle in the minds of multitudes, that the Savior may be more fully revealed to the Church, that the present ministry especially may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable to His death.

13. If the doctrine of these discourses is true, you see the immense importance of preaching it clearly and fully in revivals of religion. When the hearts of converts are warm with their first love, then is the time to make them fully acquainted with their Savior, to hold Him up in all His offices and relations, so as to break the power of every sin--to break them off for ever from all self-dependence, and to lead them to receive Him as a present, perfect, everlasting Savior.

14. Unless this course be taken, their backsliding is inevitable. You might as well expect to roll back the waters of Niagara with your hand, as to stay the tide of their corruption without a deep, and thorough, and experimental acquaintance with the Savior. And if they are thrown upon their own watchfulness and resources, for strength against temptations, instead of being directed to the Savior, they are certain to become discouraged and fall into continual bondage.

But before I conclude these remarks, I must not omit to notice the indispensable necessity of a willingness to do the will of God, in order rightly to understand this doctrine. If a man is unwilling to give up his sins, to deny himself all ungodliness and every worldly lust--if he is unwilling to be set apart wholly to the service of the Lord, he will either reject this doctrine altogether, or only intellectually admit it, without receiving it into his heart. It is an imminently dangerous state of mind to consent to this or any other doctrine of the gospel, and not reduce it to practice.

15. Much evil has been done by those who have professedly embraced this doctrine in theory, and rejected it in practice. Their spirit and temper have been such as to lead those who saw them to infer, that the tendency of the doctrine itself is bad. And it is not to be doubted that some who have professed to have experienced the power of this doctrine in their hearts, have greatly disgraced religion by exhibiting any other spirit than that of an entirely sanctified soul. But why, in a Christian land, should this be a stumbling block. When the heathen see persons from Christian nations who professedly adopt the Christian system, exhibit on their shores and in their countries, the spirit which many of them do, they infer that this is the tendency of the Christian religion. To this our Missionaries reply that they are only nominal Christians, only speculative, not real believers. Should thousands of our church members go among them, they would have the same reason to complain, and might reply to the Missionaries, these are not merely nominal believers, but profess to have experienced this Christian religion in their own hearts. Now what would the Missionaries reply? Why, to be sure, that they were professors of religion; but that they really did not know Christ; that they were deceiving themselves with a name to live, while in fact they were dead in trespasses and sins.

It has often been a matter of astonishment to me, that in a Christian land, it should be a stumbling block to any, that some, or if you please, a majority of those who profess to receive and to have

experienced the truth of this doctrine, should exhibit an unchristian spirit. What if the same objection should be brought against the Christian religion; against any and every doctrine of the gospel; that the great majority, and even nine tenths of all the professed believers and receivers of those doctrines were proud, worldly, selfish, and exhibited any thing but a right spirit? Now this objection might be made with truth to the whole professedly Christian Church. But would the conclusiveness of such an objection be admitted in Christian lands? Who does not know the ready answer to all such objections as these, that the doctrines of Christianity do not sanction such conduct, and that it is not the real belief of them that begets any such spirit or conduct; that the Christian religion abhors all these things to which they object. And now suppose it should be replied to this, that a tree is known by its fruits, and that so great a majority of the professors of religion could not exhibit such a spirit, unless it were the tendency of Christianity itself to beget it. Now who would not reply to this, that this state of mind and course of conduct of which they complain, is the natural state of man uninfluenced by the gospel of Christ; that in these instances, on account of unbelief, the gospel has failed to correct what was already wrong, and what needed not the influence of any corrupt doctrine to produce that state of mind? It appears to me, that these objectors against this doctrine on account of the fact that some and perhaps many who have professed to receive it, have exhibited a wrong spirit, take it for granted that the doctrine produces this spirit, instead of considering that a wrong spirit is natural to men, and that the difficulty is that through unbelief this doctrine has failed to correct what was before wrong. They reason as if they supposed the human heart needed something to beget within it a bad spirit, and as if they supposed that a belief in this doctrine had made men wicked, instead of recognizing the fact, that they were before wicked and that, through unbelief, the gospel has failed to make them holy.

16. But let it not be understood, that I suppose or admit that any considerable number who have professed to have received this doctrine into their hearts, have as a matter of fact exhibited a bad spirit. I must say that it has been eminently otherwise so far as my own observation extends. And I am fully convinced, that if I have ever seen Christianity in the world, and the spirit of Christ, that it has been exhibited by those, as a general thing, who have professed to believe, and to have received this doctrine into their hearts.

17. How amazingly important it is, that the ministry and the Church should come fully to a right understanding and embracing of this doctrine. O it will be like life from the dead. The proclamation of it is now regarded by multitudes as "good tidings of great joy." From every quarter, we get the gladsome intelligence, that souls are entering into the deep rest and peace of the gospel, that they are awaking to a life of faith and love--and that instead of sinking down into Antinomianism, they are eminently more benevolent, active, holy, and useful than ever before--that they are eminently more prayerful, watchful, diligent, meek, sober-minded and heavenly in all their lives. This as a matter of fact, is the character of those, to a very great extent at least, with whom I have been acquainted, who have embraced this doctrine. I say this for no other reason than to relieve the anxieties of those who have heard very strange reports, and whose honest fears have been awakened in regard to the tendency of this doctrine.

18. I have by no means given this subject so ample a discussion as I might and should have done, but for my numerous cares and responsibilities. I have been obliged to write in the midst of the excitement and labor of a revival of religion, and do not by any means suppose, either that I have exhausted the subject, or so ably defended it as I might have done, had I been under other

circumstances. But, dearly beloved, under the circumstances, I have done what I could, and thank my Heavenly Father that I have been spared to say this much in defence of the great, leading, central truth of revelation--the ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

And now, blessed and beloved Brethren and Sisters in the Lord, "let me beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." "And may the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved BLAMELESS unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

## **Unbelief- No.'s 1 & 2**

Lectures X & XI

May 6, 1840

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### LECTURE X.

Text.--Heb. 3:19: "So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief." --Mark 16:16: "He that believeth not, shall be damned."

In this discussion of this subject I desire to show:

- I. What unbelief is.*
- II. Some of its developments and manifestations.*
- III. Its unreasonableness.*
- IV. Its causes or occasions.*
- V. Its wickedness.*

### **I. What is unbelief?**

It is the absence, or perhaps I should say, the opposite of faith. Faith is a felt, conscious, practical confidence in the character, providence, and word of God; and conscious assurance that what God has said shall come to pass; such an inward and felt assurance, and hearty and joyful embracing of the truth, as to produce corresponding feeling and action, and to exclude doubt. Unbelief then is a real

withholding of this inward, felt, conscious assurance or confidence--a state of mind that leaves the conduct uninfluenced by the truths of God--such a withholding of confidence as to leave both body and soul under the influence of error, to pursue a course as if the truths of God were not true.

## II. Some of the manifestations of unbelief.

- 1. One of its manifestations is, stupidity on religious subjects. It is not in the nature of a moral being to be stupid upon religious subjects upon any other principle than that of unbelief. The infinitely great and weighty truths of religion make an impression as a thing of course upon a moral being, in proportion to the fulness with which they are apprehended and believed.
- 2. Another of its developments is worldly mindedness. It is impossible that a human being should give himself up to the pursuit of worldly goods upon any other principle than that of unbelief. Let him but possess that inward, felt assurance that the infinitely great truths of religion are realities, and the world will at once dwindle to insignificance in his estimation. It will appear to be a very small thing whether he does or does not possess the wealth, the honors, the friendship, or wisdom of this world. And to spend his time and give up his thoughts to accumulating any thing that this world can give to take away, is entirely unnatural to a mind that believes in eternal realities.
- 3. Another development of unbelief is, a spirit of carefulness, or corroding and peace-destroying anxiety upon any subject. Can a man who has the conscious and felt assurance that the infinitely faithful God is pledged for the supply of all his temporal, and spiritual, and eternal wants, experience the carefulness and anxiety of one who has no such belief?
- 4. Worldly conversation is another development of unbelief. Can the infinitely interesting things of religion be felt, conscious realities to the mind whose conversation is worldly? Impossible. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." For a man to converse upon that which does not occupy his thoughts is impossible. And if eternal things are felt realities, and realities too in which the heart takes the deepest and most joyful interest, it is impossible that the conversation should not correspond with this state of mind.
- 5. Insensibility to the state of the Church and of the world, is another manifestation of unbelief. A man can no more avoid being excited by the religious state of the Church and the world, if religious truth be a reality to the mind, than he could avoid excitement, if the house or town in which he lived was all in flames.
- 6. Insensibility to the abuse which is every where heaped upon God, is a manifestation of unbelief. If the existence, character, and omnipresence of God, with their kindred truths, be realities, it would give the man who realized this, unutterable pain to witness the abuse which is heaped upon God by His creatures. Could you see your father, or mother, or wife, or husband, or governor, or king, or dearest earthly friend, abused, and experience no agony? Impossible.
- 7. Apathy in regard to spreading the gospel, proves that you do not believe it. What an excitement there was in this country a few years since, about the famine in the Cape de Verd Islands; and upon the subject of the oppression of the Greeks. What a public interest was

awakened, and what pains were taken to send them relief. Should a famine pervade Europe or America, what a universal sympathy would be awakened, and how the excited population would bestir themselves with their thousands of tons of provisions to supply their wants. This is natural, reasonable, right, and according to the laws of our being. But how shall we account for the apathy of the Church, in reference to starving souls going down to hell without the gospel? Why, only upon the principle that almost nobody believes it. It is impossible to account for it upon any other supposition.

- 8. Neglect of the Bible is another development of unbelief. What is the Bible? What are its claims? What does it profess to reveal to mankind? Why, it claims to be a revelation from God to men, a history of their past lives, and a revelation of their future destiny. In every point of view it is infinitely the most interesting book that ever existed. And yet, almost all men, even in Christian lands, are in a great measure unacquainted with its truths, and manifestly care but little about them. Now it is impossible that they should be so upon any other principle than that of unbelief. Did men believe the Bible, they would search after its meaning as they would search for hidden treasures. They would not, could not, rest satisfied, until they possessed themselves of every practical truth contained in it.
- 9. Unbelief often manifests itself in the interpretation of the Bible. Unitarians can see no sufficient evidence of the divinity of Jesus Christ. And why? Because of unbelief. It is remarkable to see to what an extent unbelief is the grand rule of biblical interpretation in the Church. Take for example, 2 Cor. 6:16-18: "And what agreement hath the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Now what an infinitely different inference the Apostle drew from these promises from what is generally drawn: (2 Cor. 7:1:) "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Here Paul saw in these promises such a fulness of meaning, as to infer at once from them, even if there were no other kindred promises in the Bible, the practicability of attaining a state of entire sanctification or holiness in this life. Mark the strength of his language. He exhorts them to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God." How easy it is to see that his faith apprehended an infinitely greater fulness in the meaning of these promises than is seen by the heart of unbelief. And why should he not make the inference he does?--for he says: "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Certainly the inference which the Apostle draws in the first verse of the next chapter, or rather the exhortation or command, as it may be regarded, to avail ourselves of the provisions, and "perfect holiness in the fear of God;" is eminently reasonable. And yet unbelief sees no satisfactory reason, either in these or in all the promises of the Bible, to warrant the conclusion, that as a matter of fact any such state is attainable in this life.

Hear that spiritual minded woman converse with her minister, of the great fulness there is

in Christ. While she speaks in general terms he consents to all she says, that there is indeed unspeakable and infinite fulness in Christ. But where does she see this fulness? Why, in the scripture declarations and promises of God's word. Now let her begin to quote them one after another as she understands them, and he will probably demur to her views of every one of them, and consider her notions as utterly extravagant, and perhaps fanatical. He consents in general to the fulness that is in Christ, but explains away in the detail, all the evidence of that fulness as apprehended by a spiritual mind. The truth is, that a spiritual mind, and a spiritual mind only, understands the real meaning of the Bible. And nothing is more common than for persons in a state of unbelief to read again and again, any and every passage in the Bible, without apprehending the real meaning of the Holy Spirit. And a man in this state of mind has, as a matter of fact, never begun to understand the fulness there is in Jesus Christ, nor the depth and extent of meaning in the declarations and promises of the Bible.

- 10. Stumbling at difficulties, is another manifestation of unbelief. There is a large class of minds that seem not to be under the influence of evidence, especially upon those subjects that in any way clash with their own interests. However weighty the evidence may be, the suggestion of the least difficulty is to them an insurmountable stumbling-block, and the shadow of an objection seems to bring them to a dead stand in regard to all progress in reform, and to give them right over to the dominion of appetite, lust, and every form of selfishness. They are eagle-eyed in discovering an objection, and seem not to have the faculty at all to answer and remove objections. A slight objection or difficulty is a sufficient reason even for their resisting the evidence of miracles. Even demonstration itself, does not in such cases seem to move their hearts. If an answer to their difficulty be suggested to them, they heed it not but for a moment, for perhaps the next hour, or the next day, you will find them still hanging up their doubts, upon their old and perhaps often answered objections, and going stubbornly on in their sins. This is a most guilty and abominable state of mind. With what odiousness did it manifest itself among the Jews, when neither the life, nor the doctrine, nor the miracles, nor the death, nor the resurrection of Christ, could convince them. Certain preconceived notions of what Christ would be--certain false and absurd interpretations of prophecy in regard to Him, were sufficient objections in their minds to break the power of all the evidence with which Christ brought forth the demonstration of His Messiahship.

It is often amazing and distressing to see how unbelief will paralyze the power of testimony in favor of truth, insomuch that no weight or accumulation of evidence can gain ascendancy over the intellect and the heart in the presence of objections oftentimes the most ridiculous.

Now with this state of mind, contrast the conduct of Abraham, the "father of the faithful." God had promised to make him "a father of many nations." But the fulfillment was delayed until both himself and wife were at such an age, that but for the promise of God, it was utterly unreasonable to expect that Sarah would have an heir. Rom. 4:19-21: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what He had promised, He was able to perform." The fact that



himself and Sarah were nearly a hundred years old, was not a sufficient objection to set aside the testimony of God with his mind. And he remained firm in the opinion that His promise would be performed.

Witness his conduct also in offering up Isaac as a burnt sacrifice. Here is another beautiful illustration of the power of faith as contrasted with unbelief. After a long time his beloved Isaac was born, who also was to be the father of many nations, through whom the promised Messiah was to come. But previously to his being the father of any offspring, God commanded Abraham to offer him as a burnt sacrifice. Now so unshaken was his confidence, that he appears not to have felt the least uneasiness about the event. Feeling probably that it might stagger Sarah's faith, he appears not to have communicated it to her, but rose up calmly in the morning, after the command was given, and proceeded to the spot, with the wood and necessary implements, manifestly expecting really to offer him according to the command of God. And in fact, as far as the mental act was concerned, he really did offer him, and is so represented in the Bible: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

Observe also the conduct of Abraham in regard to the promised land. God had promised to give him that land, and to his "seed for a thousand generations." Now Abraham lived in this country as a stranger: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." When his beloved Sarah died he bought the cave of Macpelah for a burying place, in which cave he was afterwards buried himself; and his seed did not inherit the land for more than four hundred years; which shows that Abraham understood the promise, as to be fulfilled to his descendants, and remained "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

Now how vastly different was the state of Abraham's mind from that to which I have before alluded, where a trifling objection can stumble a mind and paralyze and overthrow all confidence in the testimony of God.

- 11. Confiding more in men than in God, is another development of unbelief. How common it is for even professed Christians to have more confidence in the prayers of some mere man, than in the intercession of Christ; and to place more reliance upon the word of man than upon the word of God, and as a matter of fact, to be more influenced by the opinions, or the mere say so of men, than by the testimony and even the oath of God. Should you ask them if they had more confidence in man than in God, they would say no. But, as a matter of fact, they have, whether they are aware of it or not. Their conduct proves to a demonstration, that their faith is not in God, but in man. As an illustration of this, witness the anxieties, and carefulness of multitudes of God's professed children, on the subject of temporal provision for their families. Now if some wealthy man would give them a bond and mortgage, a check upon some bank, or even a promissory note, for ten or twenty thousand dollars, they would feel perfectly at rest in regard to the supply of their temporal wants. Their faith or confidence in this security would have its

practical influence. It would allay all their fears, silence all their carefulness in the hearts of God's professed people. "Trust in the Lord and do good, and thou shalt dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Now this, and multitudes of kindred promises, are infinitely higher and better security than can be given by the wealthiest men on earth. They are the bond, and mortgage, and promissory note, and oath of Jehovah, who cannot lie, and who has the resources of the Universe at His command. Now let me ask you, what state of mind is that which does not repose practically as a matter of fact, as much confidence in these promises, as in human obligations and securities? What do you mean? Why do you not rest? What higher possible security can you have? What shocking unbelief, and how infinitely provoking to God! that the promise of mortal man is so much more confidence in than the promise and oath of God!

- 12. Murmuring at the providence of God, is another of the developments of unbelief. Some persons are almost always in trouble, lest things should not go right under the providence of God; full of fearfulness, and trembling, and anxiety, lest the winds, and the weather, and the seasons, and millions of other things, should not be exactly agreeable to their wish; and continually murmuring at what is daily coming to pass; manifesting in the most absolute manner, either that they are entirely opposed to God, or that they are infidels, and have no belief in his providence. They manifest an utter want of confidence in His existence, and wisdom, and providence; and would fain have almost every thing in the government of the material Universe different from what it is. To-day, you are sorry that it rains--tonight you fear there will be frost--to-morrow you fear there will be a high wind--in the summer, that there will be drought--and in the winter, that there will be too much or too little snow. Indeed the unbelief of many persons keeps them in a state of almost perpetual and God-dishonoring anxiety. And is it not astonishing that this state of mind is so seldom regarded as being the very essence of all that is criminal and abominable in the sight of God?
- 13. The absence of a joyful acquiescence in the whole will of God, as expressed either in His works, or providence, or word, is also a development of unbelief. If a man has entire confidence in God in all things, he will have a supreme complacency in the will of God. He will not merely submit without rebellion, but will be joyfully acquiescent in all the works, and ways, and will of God. Whatever the weather is; whatever the seasons are; whatever God does or permits to be done, is, so far as God is concerned, most sweetly acquiesced in, by a soul in the exercise of faith.
- 14. Maintaining a false hope, is another of the developments of unbelief. God has said, "If any man hath this hope in him, (i.e. the true Christians hope,) he purifieth himself even as Christ is pure." Now how many thousands of professors of religion are there, whose hope as a matter of fact, does not manifest itself in a holy life. Of this they are just as certain as that they exist, and yet they hold on to their hope and seem determined to venture their eternal destiny upon it. Now what is this but virtually staking their eternal salvation, that this express declaration of God is not true. It is not only calling this and multitudes of kindred passages in question--it is not merely denying them--it is not merely making God a liar--but it is virtually saying, "I stake my eternal salvation, that these declarations of God are not true." Upon what other conceivable or possible ground can they hold fast to their false hope? They seem to be entirely ignorant, that their hope is the result of sheer infidelity. They have not so much as a conviction that the Bible

is true. If they had, their hope would perish like the moth in a moment. How many thousand cases are there, in which professors of religion as soon as they become convicted, and have a realizing sense of the truth of the Bible, yield up their false hopes, and seem never to have known, that the fact that they ever had a hope was attributable entirely to their unbelief.

- 15. A present refusal to enter into the rest of faith, is another of the developments of unbelief. God has said, "thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." What multitudes there are, who are continually disquieting themselves, not only about their temporal but about their spiritual state, simply because they refuse to believe that in Christ they are complete; that in Him all fulness dwells; that in Him every demand of their nature, every thing that they can need for time and eternity, is made secure by the promise and oath of God. A state of unbelief is very like a mind in the midst of some agonizing dream,

" \_\_\_\_\_ where the wreck'd desponding thought,

From wave to wave of fancied misery

At random drives, her helm of reason lost."

How often a man in some distressing dream, imagines himself poor--perhaps himself and family destitute and in want of all things--perhaps in debt, and in prison, and no means of payment, surrounded with the darkest and most forbidding prospects on every side, and on every subject; no friends, no home, no employment, no confidence in himself or in any body else. The consummation of wretchedness and despair has overwhelmed him, until some dire catastrophe breaks up his slumbers, and behold, he is at home, in bed, in health, and the reverse of all his crazy dreams is true. I thank God, he exclaims, that all this is but a dream. I thought I had no home, no friends, no health, was in debt, persecuted, imprisoned; saw no help, for time or eternity, but all this was a dream. I am now awake, and blessed be God the reality all the reverse of my vain imaginings.

Just so faith breaks up the spell that binds the mind in all its doubts, perplexities, and anxieties, and introduces it into a state of perfect rest in Christ. O the wretched unbeliever felt condemned, owed ten thousand talents to divine justice, and had nothing to pay, struggled, agonized, prayed, read, searched, looked every way, saw neither help nor hope; the remembrance of the past filled the soul with shame, and was agonizing beyond expression, present circumstances are discouraging and fill the mind with forebodings of future wrath. The future as dark as midnight; there seems to be "no eye to pity, and no arm can save." It would seem as if the aggregate of all conceivable woes, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, were in reserve for him. But, ah! He apprehends Christ, and how instantaneously the whole scene is changed. Can it be possible? he exclaims. Oh what a wretched, horrible pit of miry clay, is that from which my feet are taken. This is indeed everlasting rock. My "goings are [indeed] established." I see an ample provision, not only for the forgiveness of all my past sins, but for all my present, future, utmost, conceivable or possible wants. While the provision is absolutely boundless, and made sure by the promise of Him who cannot lie. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee." Is it so indeed? Have I such a Savior, in whom all fulness dwells?

Am I complete in Him? Is He my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, and my redemption? It is surely so. It is certain as my existence. O, I feel as if my soul were in an ocean of sweet and boundless rest and peace, and my God hath said, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." Now any refusal or neglect to enter at once into this state of mind is unbelief. And, dearly beloved, if this is so, let me inquire, was not that a most pertinent question of Christ, "When I come, shall I find faith on the earth?"

- 16. Another development of unbelief is, a want of an inward assurance and felt confidence that God's promises will be fulfilled. Take for instance, James 1:5-7: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Now who will pretend to call this truth in question? And yet, who believes it? Who has the inward assurance that is essential to faith, that he shall be taught of God? Who comes to Him with the same assurance that he will be taught, with which a student goes to his professor upon some question with which he knows him to be familiar? Why, the student goes to his teacher, with the felt and conscious expectation--with as much inward assurance as he has of his existence, that he shall be instructed. He does not go in a mere negative state of mind; but he knows that his teacher is himself informed upon the subject of his inquiry, and that he will at once lead him to an understanding of it. Now why does he expect this? Because this is the business of his teacher, and because he has pledged himself to instruct his pupils. So has God pledged Himself, in the strongest and most solemn manner, and have we not a right, nay, are we not bound to come to God for instruction, with as much felt assurance as we would exercise in going to a human teacher?

Take also, 1 Thess. 5:23, 24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved BLAMELESS unto the coming of OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." Now here the Apostle prays for the entire sanctification of spirit, soul, and body, and that our whole being may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and then pledges the faithfulness of God: "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." Now have we not a right; nay, are we not bound to exercise the utmost confidence, and to have a felt and strong assurance of mind, that what is here promised shall come to pass? Now whatever is short of this is unbelief.

See also the case of Paul, 2 Cor. 12:9: "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God had given him "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure." But Paul, fearing that it would injure his influence, besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. But Christ replied, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my grace is made perfect in weakness." Now this entirely satisfied the mind of Paul, and he immediately subjoins, "Most gladly therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." It appears that he, at once, felt an inward, conscious assurance, that allayed all his fears in regard to the influence of this thorn in the

flesh, and enabled him to say, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities." Now I suppose this to be as true of every man as of Paul, that Christ's grace is sufficient for him, in any circumstances in which the providence of God can place him; and that nothing but unbelief, prevents any Christian from experiencing the utmost confidence, and the inward unwavering assurance of mind, that Christ's grace is sufficient for him.

- 17. All asking God for an inward assurance of what He has promised, is another of the developments of unbelief. Suppose you had promised your little son, something that he knew you were abundantly able to give, but your promise did not satisfy him. He is uneasy and continues to ask, whether you will certainly do it. And notwithstanding your most solemn assurances, he should come to you and say, "Father, I want you to do something that will give me an inward assurance that you will fulfill your promise. I feel very unhappy about it. I don't realize in my mind, that you will do it. I want to feel in my heart, that I shall have it. I want that inward assurance, without which I cannot rest." Now would you not consider this a downright insult to you? Suppose you had not only repeatedly given him your word, but had confirmed it by an oath; and yet he had no felt confidence in your veracity. All asking for any additional assurances, would be regarded by you with grief and indignation. You would consider it a virtual charging you with false hood and perjury; and you would consider it an act of vast condescension in yourself to listen to such a request, and to furnish farther assurances, even were it in your power. Now let me ask, is it considered by Christians, that all asking for an inward felt assurance for that strong confidence that quiets the mind, is but an instance of shocking unbelief? Why do you not feel that assurance already? Cannot the promise and oath of God convince, persuade, and assure you, that what He has said shall come to pass? You ought to know, that the absence of this felt assurance, is a virtual charging Him with falsehood and perjury.
- 18. All pleading the promises of God without this inward, felt, unwavering assurance of mind, where the promise is plain and the application just, is an instance of unbelief. When Paul prayed against the thorn in the flesh, he had no express promise that that thorn should be removed. He was not therefore bound to believe that it would be. So Christ had no express promise that His agony in the garden should be removed. In neither of these cases did perfect faith in God, imply the belief that the particular things requested would be granted. But had there been an express promise in either or both of these cases, they both would have had the right, and been under an obligation to exercise the most unwavering assurance, that the specific blessing promised should be granted. It should be understood, therefore, that in pleading the promises of God, with a just apprehension and understanding of them, every state of mind is unbelief that falls short of the most unwavering assurance, that the thing promised shall be granted, according to the true tenor and meaning of the promise. All uneasiness of mind in regard to the event--all unhappiness through fear, that it will not be granted--every thing short of the utmost repose of mind in the veracity of God, is God-dishonoring unbelief. Suppose a student should receive letters from his father, containing the strongest assurances, that he would supply all his wants, giving him the fullest liberty to draw on him at any time for any amount he needed; and suppose it were well known that his father's fortune was very ample, and there could be no doubt of his ability to fulfill his promises; and suppose that his father's promises were backed up by oaths and the most abundant assurances that could be expressed in words: and now suppose this student is seen to be full of anxiety and carefulness about his support; laying his

plans and making arrangements to help himself, entirely independent of his father's aid. It would be manifest at once, that he had no confidence in his father's assurances. Every body would infer at once, that however rich his father might be, no confidence could be placed in his veracity. Every one might say, "You see how it is. This young man is acquainted with his father. We have seen his letters. We know what abundant promises he has given, and yet as a matter of fact, his son has not a particle of confidence in these assurances." The inference of a want of integrity in his father would be natural and certain.

Now, Christian, did you ever consider how horrible your conduct is in the eyes of an unbelieving world. They know what promises your Father has made, and they see by your anxiety and worldly-mindedness how little confidence you have in these promises. They witness your carefulness and worldly spirit, and think in their hearts, these Christians know that God is not to be trusted, for as a matter of fact they have no confidence in His promises. Now how can you in any way more deeply wound religion, than in this--more awfully and horribly dishonor God? It is a most shameful publishing, in the most impressive manner possible, that you believe God to be a liar!

- 19. Not realizing that Christ died for you in particular, is another development of unbelief. The Apostle says, that "Christ tasted death for every man." Now what state of mind is that which does not realize and feel assured, that He died for you? There is a great deal of complaining in the Church, that individuals cannot feel as if Christ died for them in particular. If He died for every man, He died for you as an individual, and every want of realizing and feeling the inward assurance of this is unbelief. It is the mind's hiding itself in the darkness of its own selfishness. You believe that he died for all men--that "He tasted death for every man;" but cannot make it seem as if He died for you. Thus you parry obligation, and hide away from realizing that your sins nailed him to the cross, and that your soul is guilty of His death, and that his love has rolled a mountain weight of responsibility upon you. It is time for you to realize that this is nothing but unbelief, and a virtual contradiction of the truth that "Christ tasted death for every man." No wonder your heart is not subdued. No wonder you are in bondage to your sins. No wonder your lusts and appetites have dominion over you, while you are so unbelieving as not to realize that what God has said is true.
- 20. All want of appropriating the truth, and promises, and warning of God, to yourself, is unbelief. There is a wonderful disposition in most professors of religion to mingle with the crowd, and to mix up their own sins, and wants, and every thing that regards themselves individually with the sins and wants of the Church at large. Now truth does no good in the world, only as it has its individual application. It sanctifies only when it is appropriated, taken home, and applied to the individual conscience and heart. Not to appropriate it to yourself, is like an individual invited to a feast with many others; but does not go himself, because the promise is general; or when he is there, does not eat himself, because the provision was made for all the guests. The grand reason why he should go as an individual, why he should partake personally without hesitation, is because the provision is general, and every one has a right and is expected to partake of course. How shocking it is that so many professors of religion let the provisions of the gospel lie before them, and all the promises of the Bible cluster around them, and yet because the provisions are so ample, and the promise is to everyone who will partake, they stand and look on, in their unbelief, and starve to death.

But I must defer the remaining heads of this discourse, till my next.

## LECTURE XI.

May 20, 1840

### UNBELIEF--No. 2

Text.--Heb. 3:19: "So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief." --Mark 16:16: "He that believeth not, shall be damned."

I am to show,

#### III. The unreasonableness of unbelief.

- 1. It is unreasonable, because confidence in testimony is natural to man. This is a law of his being. And until selfishness comes to take possession of his heart and blind him, in respect to any truth or thing that opposes his will or inclinations, it is one of the easiest and most natural exercises of the human mind, to confide in testimony. This is strikingly manifest in the conduct of very young children.
- 2. It is unreasonable, because confidence in testimony is one of the easiest and most natural exercises of the mind through every period of life. Society could not exist without it. All the business transactions of the world, turn upon this law of the mind, viz: its confidence in testimony. Every one knows or may know, that no such thing as government, or order, or happiness, could exist in any community without confidence.
- 3. It is unreasonable, because all evidence is in favor of unlimited and heart-felt confidence in the character and word of God.
- 4. Creation and Providence confirm the truths of the Bible, and, when properly understood, give forth the same lessons, so far as they go. The heavens above, the earth beneath, every thing within and without us, goes to confirm the proposition, that it is the perfection of reason to place the most unlimited confidence in God.
- 5. The works of creation and providence, when duly studied and understood, exhibit God in such a light as not only to confirm the testimony of the Bible, but to lead to the conclusion that the Bible means as much as it appears to mean, that God is to be trusted for all that He has promised, and that His promises mean as much as they say.
- 6. Unbelief is entirely unreasonable, because the atonement is the highest possible demonstration of God's intention to do to every human being all the good He wisely can. Certainly it is the opposite of every thing that is reasonable, to suppose that God should give His only begotten Son to die for men, and then willingly withhold any lesser good which He

can wisely bestow upon them. And this is the reasoning and the conclusion of the Apostle: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?"

- 7. In the Atonement alone we have the highest evidence that can be given, of the infinitely great love of God to every one of us--a degree of evidence that demands the most heart-felt confidence in His character, government, word, promises, providence, and carefulness for our temporal and eternal good. Reader, did you ever consider the amount and force of evidence contained in the Atonement, that God really loves you, that He loves you so much as to give His only begotten and well beloved Son to die in your stead? What higher evidence could you ask, expect, or conceive, that any being else loved you, than for him to give his own son to die to preserve your life. And should such a thing take place, would you not consider it the most shocking, unnatural, and abominable conduct conceivable, to withhold confidence in his love for you?
- 8. The Atonement so illustrates and confirms the love of God to men as to render it in the highest degree reasonable to put the most liberal construction on all His promises of good to them. Let me advert again to 2 Cor. 6:16-18, & 7:1-- "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." I have already said, that from these promises, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people; I will receive you and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters"--the Apostle infers the practicability, of entirely cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Now I would ask, if this is not one of the most reasonable inferences in the world? In the light of the Atonement, and considering the infinitely great love of God, as therein manifested, how much is it reasonable to expect God to mean, in such promises as these? What is naturally and fully implied in these and kindred promises, in view of His infinite love and the bountifulness of His heart as expressed in the Atonement? I do not hesitate to say, that it is in the highest degree unreasonable, in view of these promises alone, to draw any other inference than that which the Apostle drew from them. And what shall we say of the almost numberless exceeding great and precious promises, that were given for the express purpose of making us partakers of the divine nature? It must be admitted, that they conduct us at once to the conclusion, that it is utterly unreasonable to believe any thing less than that God will "sanctify us, spirit, soul, and body, and preserve us blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- 9. The evidence contained in the Atonement, of the infinitely great love of God to us, is, if such a thing be possible, confirmed and strengthened, by the great patience and forbearance of God exercised towards this world since the Atonement--His patience, and perseverance in using means to induce mankind to accept the Atonement--His striving by His Spirit, and all the influences He exerts to sanctify and save, seem to pile demonstration upon demonstration of



His infinite love and disposition to do us good. And certainly nothing in earth or hell can be conceived of as more unreasonable than unbelief.

- 10. To stumble at any difficulties which really lie in the way, is utterly unreasonable, for these difficulties are just what we ought to expect, and a moment's consideration would show us that it is naturally impossible it should not be so. We are but in the infancy of our being. It is but a very little that could be, by any possibility, explained to us in this world. There is scarcely a thing in the Universe that does not involve, in minds like ours, mysteries, which we do not and cannot understand. Our own nature, the nature and constitution of every thing around us, present to us mysteries as impenetrable, and difficulties as great, so far as we know, as any of the truths of religion. And yet, on other than religious subjects, we receive testimony, and believe facts, where we cannot comprehend all the philosophy and explanation of them. We are shut up to this necessity in relation to almost every thing in the Universe. And how infinitely unreasonable it is, in the midst of our ignorance of material things, to stumble at difficulties, perplex ourselves with mysteries, and withhold confidence in the testimony of God, simply because the why and the how are not in many instances understood by us.
- 11. It is vastly unreasonable, not to feel an inward assurance that God's promises shall all be fulfilled. If I owed you a thousand dollars, you might have reason to feel insecure in regard to the payment, and should you come to me and say, I doubt your responsibility, I want to feel at rest upon the subject, and wish you to give me further security, this might be very reasonable. But will you ask further security of God? Who will underwrite for Him? Who or what can make His promises more secure? Would you have a warrantee deed of the Universe, a bond and mortgage, sealed, signed, and delivered, and registered in the court of heaven? Why all this you have and more too. For "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." And now do you say, why, I want to feel in my heart, the assurance that God will fulfill His promises to me. Feel in your heart! Do not the promise and oath of God make you feel in your heart that what He has said shall come to pass? What an infinitely unreasonable and abominable state of mind is this, that can complain of the want of a felt assurance, that the God of infinite truth will not lie? Why, what security can He give? Who can be His bail? Who, or what in the Universe can make His promise more certain?

But suppose you had the bond, and mortgage, and oath of the richest man in America, for a thousand dollars. Would not your neighbors consider you a mad man, if you did not feel in your heart that your debt was secure? Yes, you would be pronounced deranged by every court of law or equity in the land. I recollect to have heard of a case, where a man of wealth became a hypochondriac and made himself continually unhappy, lest himself and family should become paupers. His wealthy connections, to relieve his mind, offered to secure to him a large amount of money annually, for the support of his family. He replied, "that would be of no avail, that "riches would take to themselves wings," that he could put no confidence in any such security." Finally, a commission of lunacy was issued to secure his property, and he pronounced a lunatic, in view of these developments of mind. Now I do not hesitate to say, that his state of mind was almost the perfection of reason, when compared with the infinite unreasonableness and insanity of not feeling the

utmost assurance that all the promises of God should be fulfilled. Why, what was there so very unreasonable in the conduct of this man? Why, he refused to trust in human security and responsibility, for the maintenance of his family. Now in one sense this might have been unreasonable, and the court may have done right in pronouncing him a lunatic or an unreasonable man. But if this is insanity, what state of mind is that which cannot confide in the testimony and oath of the infinite and ever blessed God of truth? Why, beloved, if God has promised to maintain your family--if He has told you, "trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily shalt be fed"--if the infinitely faithful God has promised to circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul--if He has promised to "sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and preserve you blameless"--is it not the widest departure from reason that can be conceived of, for you not to feel assured in your heart, that all this shall be done?

#### **IV. Causes or occasions of unbelief.**

- 1. Selfishness prevents attention to the evidence of God's character. Men are so taken up with seeking their own private interests as to have very little time for consideration in regard to the real character of God as manifested in the works of creation, providence, and grace. Men in their delirious scramble after their selfish interests almost lose the idea even of the existence of God, and to all practical purposes they often quite do this.
- 2. The selfishness of men prevents their receiving the idea that God is benevolence. Being conscious of their own selfishness, and witnessing the same principle in all around them, they come to regard all intelligent beings as selfish. It is amazing to see how difficult it is to possess the human mind of the true knowledge of God. God charges mankind with thinking that he is altogether such a one as they are; and to judge others by ourselves is indeed very natural, however presumptuous and blasphemous it may be in respect to God.
- 3. Consciousness of our own hypocrisy in many things, and the constant developments of insincerity and hypocrisy in almost all around us, naturally begets in us distrust, or a want of confidence in the sincerity and disinterested benevolence of every body.
- 4. Consciousness of our own and evidence of others unmercifulness, renders it difficult to conceive of the infinite mercy of God.
- 5. The fact that men seek and think they find their happiness in getting all they can, blinds their minds in regard to the fact, that God's character is directly the reverse of this--that benevolence is His character--that doing, instead of getting good; and that giving instead of receiving good, constitute His happiness. Men cry continually, like the horse-leech, "Give, give," and are never satisfied with appropriating to themselves, but God on the other hand, finds His happiness in giving and in pouring out blessings from his infinite fulness upon all that can be persuaded to receive them.
- 6. Men are naturally unwilling to conceive of God's character as the direct opposite of their

own. And this is one cause of their unbelief.

- 7. Unwillingness to believe whatever rebukes our sin, is another cause of unbelief.
- 8. A regard to our own reputation, is another fruitful source of unbelief. John 5:44: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Here Christ plainly teaches, that a regard to our own reputation will prevent our receiving and believing the testimony of God.
- 9. Prejudice is often a fruitful source of unbelief. To pre-judge or make up your mind on any question before you know all the facts, is of course in the highest degree calculated to bar the mind against a knowledge and belief of the truth.
- 10. Committed pride is another fruitful occasion of unbelief. When a man has committed himself in favor of any error, or against any truth, he is in the greatest danger of never coming to a knowledge of the truth. He will almost of course, reject in unbelief, any light that might correct his darkness.
- 11. Sensuality is another fruitful source of unbelief. Let any man give himself up to indulgence of his appetites, and his mind will become dark as midnight to all but sensible objects. He will "walk after the sight of his eyes, and the hearing of his ears;" but is never likely to believe or know any thing of God as he ought to know.
- 12. Confidence in the opinion of those who are themselves unbelieving will of course prevent our believing the testimony of God. This is an amazingly fruitful source of unbelief. There are great multitudes who confide more in men than in God, who suffer their confidence in God to be entirely destroyed or prevented, by the unbelieving evasions of those who profess to have, but who really have not faith in God.
- 13. The temptations of Satan, as every one knows, are the occasion of much unbelief. By contradicting God and shaking the confidence of our first parents in God, he ruined the world.
- 14. A want of a clear idea of what faith really is, is another fruitful source of unbelief. Many think that they already believe, because they admit the truths of the gospel, and have no consciousness of positive disbelief. They overlook the fact that faith is the minds' felt, and joyful assurance of the truth of God. They are aware, that they have no felt and conscious assurance. They would think this a very high and rare attainment in religion, to have a felt, clear, conscious assurance, that God's promises would be fulfilled to them. Thus supposing that what really constitutes the faith of the gospel is some very high and rare attainment, they take up with something short, and rest in a state of mind that is the mere absence of felt disbelief.
- 15. Gluttony, and every species of intemperance, are sure causes of unbelief. They all grieve the Spirit of God. They sensualize and degrade the mind, and bring it into bondage to the flesh.
- 16. Our selfish will, more than any thing and every thing else, precludes the exercise of faith.

The Jews could resist the evidence of miracles. And who has not observed how difficult it is, to beget confidence in any mind, against the will. Indeed the thing is impossible. Confidence is an act of the will itself; and it is often amazing to see what an amount of evidence may be accumulated before the mind, and yet the heart withhold its confidence. The truth is, that men do not believe God, because they will not.

## V. The wickedness of unbelief.

- 1. It is the most unreasonable abomination in the Universe. I mean as I say. There is not so great a perversion of right reason in the whole universe of mind, as unbelief. Should the son of a great prince, who possessed immeasurable wealth, be filled with cares and great anxieties, lest he should want his daily bread, who would not say that this was a vastly unreasonable and ridiculous state of mind. And suppose, to quiet his anxiety, his father gave him a bond and mortgage of all that he possessed, and made him secure by every possible security; notwithstanding which his fears should still prevail, and he should say, "I cannot realize and feel assured in my own mind, that my temporal necessities shall be supplied." Who would not pronounce this to be a most unreasonable state of mind? But how would this begin to compare with the infinite unreasonableness of that state of mind, that complains that it does not realize and cannot feel assured, that all its wants, spiritual and temporal, shall be supplied by God?
- 2. It is the most injurious sin against God that can be committed. It implies and includes:
  - (1.) A flat denial of the integrity of His character.
  - (2.) It is denying His attributes.
  - (3.) It charges Him with hypocrisy, and actually says to God, "Thou makest high pretensions of love to me--of thine ability and willingness to supply all my wants. Thou professest infinite compassion, and boastest of thine infinite grace. Thou averrest, that thou are able and willing to meet the necessities of my nature--hast given thy pledge and thine oath, and sworn by two immutable things, by which thou sayest it is impossible for thee to lie; and yet, Lord, I do not feel in my heart, that there is a word of truth in all these professions. I have no confidence in them, and do not feel in my mind as if they were true."
  - (4.) It is plainly charging God with lying, and that too, under oath.
  - (5.) It is charging Him with infinite folly and inconsistency. Indeed unbelief, cannot lodge in any mind, without virtually charging home upon God, the very worst character of any being in the Universe. For when we take into consideration God's promises and professions, how can we possibly exercise unbelief, without virtually charging Him with the very opposite of all His promises and professions.

Take again the illustration of a student, whose father has again and again, by letter, assured him that all his wants should be supplied. Now if these assurances were full,

often repeated, and even backed up by an oath, it is easy to see, this son could not doubt or make himself at all uneasy about his temporal support, without calling in question his father's ability or willingness. And now suppose the father had made as multiplied, and great, and various promises as God has; and suppose he had made as great a sacrifice, to promote the well-being of his son as God has to promote our well-being, could any thing be conceived more injurious to the father's feelings and character, than for him to have and manifest no confidence in his father's word.

- 3. Unbelief has the most injurious tendency of any sin in the Universe:
  - (1.) To ourselves, unbelief renders all heart-obedience impossible. How can we obey God from the heart, when we have no confidence in Him? All obedience to any government, parental or state government, or to the moral government of God, implies and must necessarily be based upon confidence in the ruler. If private or public confidence is destroyed, just in the same degree is the obedience of the heart rendered impossible.
  - (2.) It is in its tendency the most injurious sin to the universe of creatures that can be conceived. It is a most contagious abomination. How easily unbelief prevailed over our first parents, when the serpent suggested to Eve, that God was not sincere in his prohibition. It is truly wonderful to witness the contagious nature of unbelief. Let any one suggest a query and a doubt, or manifest in his conduct, that he has no confidence in God and His promises, and the influence seems to go forth almost with the power of omnipotence. If professors of religion manifest by their careless lives, their unbelief in the guilt and danger of sinners, it seems to act like a charm upon them. The most solemn assertions and threatenings of God are not regarded by them as any thing more than the baseless fabric of a dream. I have often been astonished to see, how the suggestions of unbelief could chill every thing to death, and put down the spirit of prayer and confidence in God, in a revival of religion. Let any one but suggest, under such circumstances, that the revival is going to decline; that God cannot work, because such and such things are in the way--let him but call in question the application or meaning of the promise; and it will be seen how easily confidence can be destroyed, and how unbelief in any case, if it finds vent, will be in a community like the letting out of waters.
- 4. Unbelief tends to annihilate God's influence over the Universe. His influence over mind consists in the estimation in which He is held by moral beings. Where ever there is not a felt confidence in God, His influence over that mind is destroyed. And thus unbelief tends to the complete annihilation of the government of God. One great design of the Atonement was to restore public confidence. Satan had suggested, and our first parents had believed him, that God was selfish, in prohibiting their eating a certain fruit, on the ground that they would "become as gods, knowing good and evil." The Atonement was designed to exhibit in the strongest manner, God's disinterested love to men, that He might restore their confidence in Him, and thus gain dominion over their hearts, for their good and His own glory. In the Atonement He has given the highest evidence that He possibly could give, both of the disinterested nature and infinite degree of his love. But unbelief sets this all aside, and declares after all, that it has no confidence whatever in God. Thus it completely annihilates the power of moral government, and renders the gospel the savor of death unto death. It is a direct refusal to be satisfied with the

infinite evidence that God has given of His disinterested love to man. It is virtually saying, "I will not be satisfied with any evidence that God has given or can give, of the integrity of His character. He is not to be trusted. He shall not have my confidence, say or do what He may."

- 5. Unbelief is the most grievous to God of any sin that can be committed. Suppose a husband should find, that his wife had no confidence at all in him, and suppose him to entertain for her the sincerest affection, and always to have manifested it in every possible way. Now what could be more grievous to his heart than to find that his wife had no confidence in him? If, under these circumstances, a husband would have cause of grief--would have reason to feel deeply injured, and wounded to the very heart; what must be the state of God's feelings, when He sees that His creatures have no confidence in Him, notwithstanding the infinite pains He has taken to secure their confidence, and thereby save their souls.
- 6. Unbelief "tramples the Son of God under foot, and counts the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and does despite to the Spirit of grace." It says, I have no confidence in the necessity, or nature, or reality of the Atonement, and as for Jesus Christ, I do not believe that "His blood cleanseth from all sin." I do not feel in my heart, that He is "my wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." I in fact do not realizingly believe any such thing.
- 7. It is the cause of all other sins. A little reflection will convince any one who will look at the subject, that unbelief or the withholding a felt confidence in the character, word, and promises of God, is the cause of worldly mindedness, and selfishness, under all the forms in which they exist in this world. Let the mind but have a conscious realizing assurance, that all the infinitely interesting things contained in the Bible are realities, and it instantly breaks the power of selfishness and pride, and every other abomination, and delivers the soul up to the entire dominion of truth.
- 8. It is the setting aside of infinite evidence, and therefore, the greatest conceivable departure from the law of our nature. It has been already remarked, that belief in testimony is natural to man; and the mind in an unperverted state is as yielding as air to the influence of evidence. But what must be the state of that mind that can withhold confidence in God, in the face of all the evidence He has given of the infinite excellence of His character. It is the most outrageous mutiny against the laws of our being, the most abominable setting at nought and turning upside down all of the tendencies of unperverted mind that can be conceived.
- 9. It is the most horrible exhibition of prejudice that the universe any where presents, or ever witnessed. But for the appalling exhibition of the facts in the case, it would seem utterly incredible that mankind should not be entirely satisfied, and universally and continually exercise the most implicit confidence in the word, and character, and promises of God. We sometimes witness very shocking exhibitions of prejudice, in one human being towards another, insomuch that the prejudiced mind can really believe nothing good of him against whom the prejudice is entertained. Whatever appears to be fair, he suspects of hypocrisy; and accounts for any appearance of goodness, in any and every way, rather than admit the reality. Every one feels that there are few more hateful exhibitions of the human character than this.

But how infinitely detestable is that state of mind that is so given up to prejudice against God, as at once to set aside the infinite weight of testimony in His favor and to withhold all practical and heartfelt confidence in His word and oath?

- 10. God has done all that the nature of the case admits, to secure and even compel the exercise of confidence in Him. Suppose some mischievous mind to have introduced rebellion into a human government, by insinuations that had destroyed the confidence of the people in their ruler. And suppose, that while he had the power to overcome and crush, and slay them all at once, he should notwithstanding so pity them as to give his only begotten and well beloved son to atone for their sins. Suppose he had made every exhibition of his disinterested love that could be made, and yet, confidence was withholden, and his revolted subjects continued to maintain their pernicious distrust in his character. Well might he ask, "what more could I have done that I have not done to secure the confidence of this people. I have laid down my life to do you good, and how is it that ye do not believe?" For one might think it impossible, that unbelief should have a place in this world, after all the manifestations of God's love that have been made to it. But O, what shall we say, when we find not only the heathen world, but the Christian world, and even the Christian Church, withholding confidence in God, and manifesting the most shocking unbelief, in regard to His providence and word? What more can God do to secure public and individual confidence? What higher evidence can He give? or, in His own emphatic language, "What more can I do for my vineyard that I have not done?"
- 11. Unbelief is eminently a willful sin. It is a matter of common observation, that it is exceedingly hard to make men believe what they are unwilling to believe. And when the will is strongly opposed to any truth it is next to impossible to retain the confidence of the mind in that truth. But what must be the strength of depravity in that heart--what must be the power of prejudice, what invincible strength must there be in the opposition of that will, when the confidence of the mind is not secured by infinite evidence; when the mind can look over the whole field and see mountains of evidence piled upon mountains, and yet feel not a particle of inward confidence and resting of heart in the character and word of the blessed God.

The influence of the will in modifying our belief, on almost any subject, is strikingly illustrated in a great many ways. A drunkard does not believe that alcohol is poison. A Universalist does not believe that there is any hell. An epicure does not believe that his innutricious condiments are injurious to his health. And it is often striking to observe the amount of influence which the will has in modifying the opinions of men. And when we come to speak of the faith of the gospel, which implies and includes volition, it is self-evident that there can be no faith where the will does not yield. And to talk of an unwilling faith is to speak of an unwilling willingness. The truth is that men are not influenced by evidence in cases where their will is opposed to the truth. They are stubborn and rebellious, not convinced, not humbled, and their confidence not gained, let God say what He will.

## REMARKS.

1. One unbelieving soul may do immense evil; especially if he be a minister of the gospel. How easy

it is for a blind minister to keep his congregation for ever in darkness, in regard to the meaning of the gospel and the fulness of the salvation provided.

2. A mind under the influence of unbelief, is a very dangerous interpreter of the word of God. Without faith, no man discovers the true meaning of the Bible. Nor can he by any possibility discover its spiritual import, without the state of mind which is always implied in a right understanding of the word of God.

3. The Church is robbed of its inheritance by unbelief. Inasmuch as the promises are conditioned upon faith, and cannot in their own nature be fulfilled where there is not faith, how immense is the evil of unbelief in the Church of God? Gospel rest and salvation lie before them in all their fulness, completeness of Christian character in Christ Jesus, and the sanctification of body, soul, and spirit, are proffered to them and urged with infinite sincerity upon them; but all are rejected through unbelief. Those who are unbelieving in regard to the fulness of Christ's salvation, take away the key of knowledge. They neither enter into gospel rest themselves, and those that would enter they hinder; especially is this true of those ministers who call in question the attainability of entire consecration to God in this life.

4. Unbelief is the last sin that deserves any commiseration. And yet it is very generally whined over, as if it were a calamity rather than a crime.

5. An unlearned but spiritual mind will understand the Bible, much more readily than learned unbelief.

6. A spiritual mind is learned in spiritual things; and a mind may know much about other things, and have no spiritual discernment, in respect to the truth of God.

7. It is often distressing to see a man who thinks himself learned, look with a kind of contempt upon the opinions of those whom he considers unlearned in respect to the real meaning of the Bible.

8. Faith sees the doctrine of entire sanctification abundantly revealed in the word of God. And when once the attention of the mind is directed to the examination of this question, it has often appeared wonderful to me, that any one should doubt whether this is a doctrine of revelation. I have already remarked upon the inference which Paul drew, from the last verses of the sixth chapter of 2nd Corinthians: "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Now the faith of Paul instantly recognized in these promises, which he quoted from the Old Testament, the truth that entire sanctification is attainable in this life; and immediately adds--"Having therefore these promises, dearly, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Here, then, Paul saw a sufficient guaranty for the belief of this doctrine, and that to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," was, by the grace of God, put entirely within our reach. Now if Paul could draw such an inference as this, from these promises, (and who, when they consider what is implied in the promises,



can say that his inference was not legitimate?) what shall we say of that mind, who can look over all the exceeding great and precious promises which have been given, that we might be made partakers of the divine nature, and yet see nothing to inspire the confidence, that a state of entire sanctification in this life, is in such a sense attainable, as to make its attainment a reasonable object of pursuit?

9. No man rightly understands and believes the Bible, who is living in the indulgence of any known sin. There are multitudes, who seem to be trying to maintain a state of spirituality, whole in some things, and perhaps in many things, they are not entirely upright in their lives. They do not walk according to the best light they have, and are yet trying to exercise faith and keep up spiritual intercourse with God. The thing is naturally and for ever impossible. Spiritual mindedness and disobedience are direct contraries. It is absurd to expect to have communion with God, and yet live in the indulgence of any known sin.

10. Many think they have faith, who are yet conscious that they have no inward, felt confidence or assurance of mind, in regard to the word and promises of God. They are not conscious of a direct doubting or a disbelieving, what God has said; but are in that state of mind, that, while it does not deny directly and consciously, yet has no felt, practical confidence in the truth of God.

11. The lowest degree of real faith has, for a long time, been looked upon as a rare attainment in piety. That state of mind in which a person feels a confident assurance, that God's promises shall be fulfilled; that state of mind, that views the truth of God as a reality; has been looked upon, and spoken of, as evidencing a high degree of spirituality; when, in fact, such a state of mind is essential to the exercise of real faith.

12. In view of this subject, and of the present state of the Church, is it wonderful that Christ inquired, "When I come shall I find faith upon the earth?"

13. No one believes who finds it hard to love. True "faith works by love." Love is the natural and certain results of living faith.

14. No one believes who finds it hard to repent. Can he find it difficult to repent of his sins, who sees the death of Christ to be a reality?

15. No one believes, who has not the spirit of thanksgiving and praise. Multitudes of individuals suppose themselves to believe, who rarely, if ever, are exercised with a spirit of thanksgiving and of praise to God. Can it be possible that any mind can believe, and have a realizing sense of the infinite love, and truth, and grace of God, and yet have no heart to praise Him?

16. No one believes, who find it difficult to pray. Can a man who has a realizing sense of the state of the world and of the Church, and of the willingness and ability of God to bless mankind, restrain prayer? Will not his very breath be prayer, devotion, and praise? Will not his very heart within him be liquid as water? Will not his bowels of compassion yearn mightily, over a dying world? And will not his soul stand in a continual attitude of thanksgiving, and praise, and supplication?

# Blessedness of Benevolence

Lecture XII  
June 3, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

On what occasion our Lord Jesus Christ uttered these words we are not informed, as they are not recorded by the Evangelists. But we have the authority of an inspired Apostle, that He taught this doctrine. In considering this subject I will state:

*I. What constitutes true religion.*

*II. Some of the elements that enter into the happiness of the true Christian.*

*III. Notice several forms of delusion under which multitudes are laboring.*

## **I. What constitutes true religion.**

The whole of religion may be comprehended in the simple term, benevolence, or love. This love must be supreme in degree towards God, and equal to men. It must also be disinterested; i.e. God must be loved for what He is, and our neighbor's happiness must be chosen and sought for its own sake, and not from any interested motive. But I must enter still more particularly into what is implied in benevolence, or that love which constitutes religion.

- 1. It implies a spirit of justice.
- 2. Of mercy.
- 3. Of truth.
- 4. Of complacency in goodness.
- 5. Of opposition to sin, and sinners as such.

These are only some of the modifications of benevolence, as it is developed by circumstances calling for these particular expressions of it. But,

- 6. Benevolence implies a desire to promote the happiness of all beings. Benevolence is good will, or a desire to promote the happiness of its object. In a still more extended sense, it is the love of being in general, and a desire to promote happiness for its own sake. It regards the

happiness of every being capable of happiness, as a real substantial good in itself, and desires his happiness most who has the greatest capacity for happiness.

- 7. It implies a desire to promote the happiness of enemies as well as friends. True benevolence does not distinguish in this respect between enemies and friends, but regards the happiness of all as a real good. Happiness is its object, and whether this can be promoted in an enemy or a friend, it matters not.
- 8. It not only implies a desire, but the choice of the happiness of all beings, so far as it can be consistently promoted. It is very common for persons to desire things which, upon the whole, they do not choose, the desires or emotions often being in opposition to the will. It should be understood that benevolence is good willing and not merely good desiring. Man's desires do not influence his outward conduct any farther than he wills in accordance with his desire. Good willing always produces good acting, because the will always governs the external conduct; but there may be much desire that never begets corresponding action.
- 9. The benevolence that constitutes true religion is a disposition of the mind, in distinction from those accidental choices that are sometimes made under the pressure of peculiar circumstances, which after all, by no means, constitute the character of a man. A miser may be so wrought upon, and his constitutional susceptibilities so excited by the presence of some object of great distress, as for the moment to open his hand to give relief, and perhaps in five minutes call himself a thousand fools for having done so. No one therefore would say that this was true benevolence. It implies no radical change in his character. It is only the wringing from his selfish hand, by the force of circumstances, acting on his constitutional susceptibilities, what it was not in his heart to give, and that which would not have been given, but as a relief to his own agony at the time. Now it should be understood that the benevolence which constitutes true religion is a continually abiding disposition of the mind. I mean by disposition, what is commonly meant by it, the controlling propensity of a man's mind. We speak of a man as having an avaricious disposition, a worldly, jealous, or envious disposition. We call this a disposition, because we observe it to be the permanent bent or tendency of the mind. The avaricious man manifests his disposition in all his worldly arrangements. It is seen to be the great tendency and effort of his mind to gain worldly possessions. The envious man is seen to be instituting comparisons between himself and others, and naturally and always to manifest an ill temper towards those whom he considers as competitors or superiors. Now a benevolent man is seen to have a benevolent disposition. That is his manifest character. The happiness of being is the great object of pursuit with him. He lays his plans of doing good, and of carrying out and gratifying his leading disposition, just as naturally and certainly as an avaricious man would. But while the avaricious man lays his plans to get and hoard up, the benevolent man lays his plans to diffuse abroad. All other men are aiming, under some form, to promote self-interest, to promote their own happiness by direct efforts. But the benevolent man seeks not his own happiness, but finds it in endeavoring to make others happy. His own happiness is not the object of pursuit. And yet he is the most certain to find it in proportion as he has the less regard to it. To illustrate this: Suppose that two men are accosted by a miserable beggar in circumstances of the utmost necessity. One of them is a selfish and the other a benevolent man. They are both exercised however with a degree of compassion and both give of their means to the object of

distress. It is easy to see, that he is the most happy in giving who is the most disinterested, and who has the least regard to his own happiness in the case, because the relief to him is the greatest gratification. If real piety and true benevolence were the sole motives that induced the benevolent man to give, the relief of the beggar would beget in him unmingled satisfaction, while at the same time, the one who was less benevolent would feel less intent on relieving his necessities, and of course less gratified and less happy by witnessing the relief.

It should be understood then, and always borne in mind, that Christian benevolence is a controlling disposition, or propensity of mind, and develops itself just as any other disposition manifests itself, by the daily walk of its possessor.

## **II. What constitutes true Christian happiness.**

- 1. It consists in the exercise of benevolence itself. The human mind is so constructed by its Author, that the exercise of benevolence in itself, is exceedingly sweet and grateful to the mind. It has an excellent relish and sweetness that enters into the very substance of the exercise. There is a conscious happiness diffused through the mind, that seems to be woven into the very texture of benevolence itself. This is to the benevolent mind like the perennial fountain, pouring forth continually the sweet and refreshing waters of life.
- 2. Another element of Christian happiness is, that which consists in the gratification of the benevolent disposition. I have already said, there is a sweet satisfaction in the exercise itself. But still, the exercise is one thing, and its gratification another. The gratification is another ingredient that greatly augments the sum of happiness. To will to do good, is sweet, but to really succeed in doing the good that we desire, is sweeter still.
- 3. Another element of the Christian's happiness is the self-complacency that follows and accompanies the exercise or gratification of benevolence. This is indispensable to complete happiness. Men may experience a kind and degree of happiness, in indulging in those things in which all the powers of the mind do not harmonize; but if they are indulging in things to which their consciences are opposed, the inward mutiny and conflict thus produced, mingles in their cup of gratification the gall of bitterness. But benevolence always has the approbation of conscience. And the mind, from its very structure, necessarily feels a self-complacent satisfaction in the exercise of benevolent affections.
- 4. Another element of this happiness is the life and harmonious action of all the powers of the soul in its exercise. The mind is so constructed, that it will not, cannot harmonize in any other course of action. It was made to be benevolent. Benevolence is its proper element, and it can no more properly enjoy life in the exercise of selfish affections, than a fish can live out of water. But there is an excellent harmony, like an exquisitely tuned instrument, in the movements of all the powers of the mind in the exercise and gratification of benevolence. Like an exquisite machine, that is made of such materials, kept so clean, and so oiled as to cut off all friction as far as possible, it moves so still, so sweet, so safe, there is a loveliness in the harmony of its movements. So the soul in the exercise of benevolence is made to harmonize. Every power of the mind consents. There is no jarring, no grating, no friction, no inward mutiny or repugnancy to grate like discord; but all is loveliness; quietness, and assurance for ever.

- 5. Another element of the Christian's happiness is the full assurance that he pleases God. The mind is so constructed, that when it is conscious of exercising perfect benevolence, it can no more doubt that it pleases God, than it can doubt its own existence. Love naturally and necessarily casts out all fear. There is in the very workings of benevolence itself, the accompanying assurance, that these affections and this course of conduct please God.
- 6. Another element in the Christian's happiness is joy and rejoicing in the happiness and the glory of God. Remember, the happiness of being is the benevolent man's object of pursuit. He always rejoices in true happiness, wherever he sees it; and of course he feels the greater satisfaction, by how much the more happiness he contemplates or beholds as existing. To him the happiness of God is infinitely the greatest good in the Universe, and the glory of God, as it stands connected with the happiness of God and that of His whole government, is considered by him as the supreme good. The consideration then of God's infinite and eternal happiness, of His infinite and eternal glory, is the source of present, perpetual, boundless, and eternal consolation. What a consideration for a benevolent mind to dwell upon, is the infinite and unchanging happiness of God--an infinite, fathomless, shoreless ocean of perfect, infinite blessedness. To a benevolent mind this is an unfailing source of eternal joy.
- 7. Another element of the Christian's happiness is the happiness and good things of all other beings. A truly benevolent mind participates in the happiness, and really enjoys the happiness of all around him, as if those things were his own. And nothing can prevent a benevolent mind from tasting the cup of every man's happiness and sharing with every man, the happiness of those good things which God bestows upon him, and that too without, in the least degree, diminishing the bliss of him whose happiness he shares. He is entirely satisfied and rejoiced to see things bestowed upon others that are withholden from himself. If, in time of great drought, for example, a cloud arises that promises fair to water his farm, his garden, or his neighborhood; if a change of wind carries the blessing to another town, where it is as much needed, he is equally well pleased, and enjoys the refreshing of his neighbors as if it were his own.
- 8. Another element of the Christian's happiness consists in his direct personal efforts to promote the good of others. His very toils and labors have in them the relish of an excellent sweetness, as carry with them and in them their own reward. Why, a benevolent mind is a disposition to do good to others. Now in doing good he is gratifying his natural propensities; he is acting out his governing disposition; so that while he is not seeking his happiness as an end at all, he is surely finding an exquisite enjoyment, in his disinterested efforts to do good.
- 9. The Christian's happiness consists in the present and eternal indulgence of a ruling propensity or disposition to do good. A Christian has nothing else to do any more than God has. And from the very moment of his conversion, he has nothing to do to all eternity but to pursue uninterruptedly and as zealously as he pleases, the ruling disposition of his soul. And God has so circumstanced him, as to surround him continually with objects upon which he can gratify his benevolence. He has an ample field for the exercise and pouring out of all the benevolence of his soul, in efforts to do good; without ever, for one hour, being called off from that which

constitutes his chief delight--from pursuing and indulging without restraint, the grand, peculiar, absorbing disposition of his soul.

### III. Several forms of delusion.

- 1. Many seem to mistake light for religion. They get some new views of religious truth which produce a corresponding excitement of mind, and they bustle about, under the impression that this excitement is religion; when, at the same time, if they would narrowly watch, it would be seen that their heart is still selfish, and not benevolent--that their ruling propensity or disposition is not changed--that while they are excited by their new views of religious truth, it is emotion and not will that is active. Their business habits and transactions will soon develop the fact, that selfishness is, after all, in some form, the ruling propensity of their mind. In all such cases, there is of course a radical mistake, a fatal delusion, under which the mind is laboring.
- 2. Many are deceiving themselves, by the exercise of a legal religious zeal. Paul testified of his countrymen, that "they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." I have long been convinced, that much of the zeal manifested by professors of religion, and many of the professed converts, is of this character. They slumber on, until awakened by the thunders of Sinai; when they bluster about, urged by a sense of duty and conscience, and a multitude of legal considerations, while they are conscious, that they are not influenced by the deep love of God and of souls. The evidences of their legal spirit are:
  - (1.) A manifest want of a deeply heart-broken and humble spirit.
  - (2.) A manifest want of a deep satisfaction of mind in the work itself.
  - (3.) The absence of that abiding soul satisfaction which belongs to the exercise and gratification of benevolent feeling. Many very zealous persons are any thing but truly happy in the exercise of the affections which are working within them. They carry with them all the while a sense of condemnation. They feel as if their holiest exercises needed to be confessed as sins, and there is all the time a grating and friction within, and a felt consciousness, that all is not right, a sense of defilement, a want of integrity and perfect uprightness of intention, and a consciousness of more or less selfishness in every thing they say or do. Now persons in this state of mind do not conceive what a clean heart is. They do not understand the immense and radical difference between their feelings and the exercises of a purely benevolent mind. How a person can live without condemnation, they cannot understand. And their experience being what it is, they of course look with great suspicion upon any who profess to live without a sense of condemnation, and judge of course that it is because they are not well acquainted with their own hearts, and also are ignorant of the purity of God's law. Now I can understand very well, from my own experience, what this state of mind is. I know very well what it is to have a legal zeal, that would compass sea and land to make a proselyte, and yet carry with it, as if woven into its very texture, the sense of condemnation. The fact is, the mind is so constructed that whenever it is enlightened, it cannot be satisfied with a legal zeal. Nothing but the exercise of unmingled benevolence can make it happy. Nothing but a conscious exercise of right affections can free it from the sting of self-condemnation. Herein is a vast delusion.

Persons in this state of mind are very apt to suppose that there is no other state than this to which Christians may attain in this life, and to judge, and censure, and condemn all who profess the consciousness of a clean heart.

- 3. Many mistake emotion for disposition. They do not distinguish between the emotions which constitute their excitement of mind and that controlling disposition, or state of the will, that constitutes true benevolence.
- 4. Others still mistake mere assent for disposition. They are enlightened, and hold correct opinions; and knowing that religion does not consist in emotion, they are satisfied without emotion, and do not consider, that although emotion may sometimes exist independent of the will, yet as a matter of fact and philosophy, the emotions take fire most easily in accordance with the disposition, and men feel most naturally and easily on that subject, that most fully chimes with the leading disposition of their minds. Therefore if an individual supposes that he has a benevolent disposition, while his emotions are not easily enkindled and fanned into a flame, upon the presentation of the objects of benevolence, he is deceived. He has the religion of opinion, and not the propensity or ruling disposition.
- 5. There are many instances in which individuals are deceived, by setting down to the account of benevolence that which as a matter of fact, is only one form of selfishness triumphing over another. As for example:
  - (1.) The love of reputation may be the supreme ruling propensity of mind, and triumph over lust, intemperance, and a host of other subordinate propensities. So that a man or a woman may be liberal in giving, chaste in conversation and deportment, and of temperate habits; and all this may be put to the account of true benevolence, or religion, when it should be ascribed only to the love of reputation.
  - (2.) Again, a literary ambition may triumph over sloth or appetite, and many other evil, but subordinate, propensities of the mind.
  - (3.) A spirit of avarice may be the ruling propensity of the mind, and triumph over lust, intemperance and many forms of sin.
  - (4.) Selfish fears and hopes may restrain inward wickedness, and all these restraints may be, and often are, supposed to result from pure benevolence, when in fact they are only one form of selfishness, controlling and subordinating other forms of the same principle.
- 6. The only remaining form of delusion, that I shall now notice, is, where the individual's happiness consists, not in the exercise of his benevolence, but in the consideration of his own safety. We sometimes see persons settle down into an Antinomian security, and manifest great quietness and peace of mind, where happiness and peace are manifestly based upon the consideration of their own safety. Now this is as far as possible from a truly religious state of mind. Real religious happiness arises out of the true saint. To be sure, the contemplation of the grace of Christ, the joys of Heaven, and an eternity of blessedness at God's right hand, come in

to make up the aggregate of a Christian's happiness; but the basis and foundation of the whole is that which belongs to the exercise and gratification of benevolent affections themselves.

## REMARKS.

1. The natural heart does not apprehend the true nature of religion. I have often wondered what sceptics can be thinking about, and how it is that they can have any doubts of the necessity of a change of heart. But a consideration of the selfishness of their hearts, explains the whole difficulty. God's state of mind is the exact opposite of their own. Benevolence is the contrast of a selfish disposition. Selfishness finds its happiness in getting; benevolence, in giving. Selfishness is always endeavoring to promote its own, and benevolence the happiness of others.
2. This remark leads me to say, that we can here see the necessity of examples, to illustrate the true nature of religion. A leading object of Christ in taking to Himself human nature was, to associate with men, and possess their minds of the true idea of God's character, so to live and associate with them, that they might observe what God would be as a Neighbor, or Brother, or Son, or Friend; what spirit and temper He possessed, and would manifest, under the circumstances in which men are. As soon as a few had caught the rare idea, that God was love, He sends them forth, "as sheep among wolves," to lay down their lives, as He had done, for a rebellious world. They catch His spirit, imitate His example, and the waves of salvation roll wherever they go; and a few years had well nigh seen a world prostrate at the feet of Christ. But alas! the state, with her selfish and polluting embrace, soon seduced the Church into selfishness and apostacy from God. And the world can never be converted, only as examples and illustrations of what true religion is, are held up in the lives of professed Christians, before the eyes of men.
3. You can see from this subject, what constitutes real apostacy from God. The moment you set up a selfish interest as the object of pursuit, go to any place, engage in any business, marry, or take any other step, inconsistent with the exercise and pursuit of the great ends at which God aims, you are in a state of apostacy from God; you have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and are "hewing out broken cisterns that can hold no water."
4. You see from this subject, what constitutes the happiness of God. Benevolence is His whole character. His benevolence is infinite. His happiness is, therefore, infinite and unchangeable.
5. You see, that Christians may and ought to be as happy, in proportion to their capacity, as God is.
6. You see what constitutes the unhappiness of many professors of religion. It is selfishness. It is naturally impossible, that a selfish mind should be happy. Selfishness lets loose an infernal brood of scorpions and vipers, to sting the soul's happiness to death.
7. You see also, what constitutes the misery of all men. They are pressing after happiness but cannot obtain it. And the reason is, they are seeking it in that in which it cannot consist. If a man pursues his own happiness as an end, he may as well expect to overrun his own shadow. The mind is so constituted that it cannot possibly be obtained in this way. To be disinterestedly benevolent, is the only possible way to be happy. To seek not your own, but another's good, is for ever and unalterably indispensable to the happiness of a moral being.



8. What striking evidence does the human constitution afford of the benevolence of God! He has so constructed it, that happiness is the certain and necessary result of benevolence, and that no other possible working of the constitution can result in happiness. What striking and unanswerable testimony is this to the benevolence of the Author of our nature!

9. Those who do not enjoy the good things of others, or find occasions of gratitude, and really feel the spirit of gratitude, for blessings bestowed upon others, are not Christians. I have already said, that true benevolence is the love or desire of our neighbor's happiness, or rather the willing or choosing his happiness. Now whenever blessings are conferred upon others, then we are pleased. It is what we choose. It is in accordance with and a gratification of the ruling propensity of our minds. It is just as certain then as our existence, that if we are benevolent, we shall rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep; that we shall participate in the joys and sorrows of those around us, and rejoice in and be thankful for all the good bestowed upon the world.

10. From this subject it is easy to see, of what spirit those are who are ready to murmur at others possessing good things, of which themselves are deprived. Did you ever see a family of selfish children, and witness their complainings and murmurings, whenever something was bestowed upon one, which the others had not received? "Now, Ma, you have given brother such a thing and have not given it to me. Now let me have the best things; let me have the largest piece, and the most and best of every thing." Now this is a supremely hateful spirit; but it is exactly the spirit of many professors of religion. Instead of rejoicing to see their brothers and sisters blest with temporal or spiritual good things, they are ready to murmur and be offended, because these things are not bestowed on them. This manifests the supreme selfishness of their minds, and affords the highest demonstration that they are not Christians.

11. They are not Christians, who have no heart to thank God for bestowing blessings upon their enemies. There is no religion in selfish gratitude. A supremely selfish mind might be thankful for blessings bestowed upon itself, or upon its friends who are accounted as parts of itself. But a truly benevolent mind will rejoice in blessings bestowed on enemies as well as friends.

12. It is easy to see, that the covetous and the ambitious are not and cannot be Christians.

13. That a spirit of worldly competition is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of benevolence.

14. We see what that state of mind must be, that is never willing to do a neighbor a kindness without taking pay for it. Some persons seem never to have the spirit of doing good, or of obliging any body but themselves. The pay seems to be the sole motive in doing almost any thing and every thing for those around them. They seem never to enjoy a luxury in making those around them happy, for its own sake. And if they do any thing for a neighbor, it is, by no means, for the sake of doing good, but for the sake of the pay. Now every one can see, that if a minister should be actuated by such motives in visiting the sick, and in preaching the gospel, every one would say there was no virtue in it. They will go and visit the sick as often as the physician does, and take as much pains to restore the health of the soul as the physician does the health of the body; and in all this they are expected to be actuated by pure benevolence. And for all this they never think of asking any pay, whether they have any

salary or not. What minister has not traveled hundreds of miles, and spent hours, and days, and weeks, and months, in such labors of love, without ever expecting or desiring to receive an earthly remuneration for it. He found in the very exercise itself an excellent solace, and an exquisite relish, that was to his benevolent mind worth more than gold. But what is expected of ministers of the gospel in this respect, should be true of all men. They should as far as possible, "do good and lend, hoping for nothing again." They should be actuated by disinterested benevolence, knowing that "with whatsoever measure they mete it shall be measured to them again."

15. We see what we should think of those who are unwilling to exercise any self-denial, for the sake of doing good to others. There is one man, who will not give up what he calls the temperate use of alcohol, for the sake of doing good. He contends, that it is lawful for him to use it moderately; that others have no right to make a stumbling-block of his use of it; and as for practising a little self-denial for the sake of the example, he will not do it. Here is a woman, who professes to love God supremely, and her neighbor as herself. She prays for the heathen, and thinks herself truly religious; and yet, she will not deny herself the use of tea and coffee, to save the heathen world from hell. The wail of eight hundred millions of human beings is coming upon every wind of heaven, crying out, "send us tracts, send us Bibles, send us missionaries, send us the means of eternal life; for we are dying in our sins." "But ah!" says these professing Christians, men and women-- "It is hard times; money is scarce; we are in debt; we must turn away our ears from hearing these wailings of woe." Now brother--sister--let me sit down at your table. What have you here? How much does this tea and coffee cost you a year? How much do these worse than useless articles of luxury curtail your ability to send the gospel to the perishing? My sister, how many Bibles and tracts have you used up in this way? How many Bibles, at five shillings each, might be sent by you to the heathen every year, were you willing to exercise a little self-denial, and that too, a self-denial which your own health and highest good demand? Brother, perhaps you use tobacco. How long have you used it? The price of how many Bibles does it cost you a year? And how many heathen might this day have had Bibles in their hands, who will now go down to hell, without ever hearing of the Savior, who might have had the Bible and eternal life, had you had one particle of benevolence in your heart? Will you make the calculation? Will you ask, how many Bibles and tracts might have been purchased by the money you have squandered in this manner? And will you settle the question, definitely, whether you are influenced by the love of God and of souls? Whether you eat and drink these things for the glory of God, or for the gratification of your own lust? Surely, the question is of no less importance, than whether benevolence or selfishness constitutes your character.

16. Again, we see what to think of those whose religious duties are not a source of the highest enjoyment to them. The religion of many persons seems to make them miserable, and whatever they do for the cause of Christ they seem to do painfully and grudgingly. The reason is, they are not actuated by love. If love were the ruling disposition of their hearts, their religion would be a source of the sweetest enjoyment to them.

17. We see what to think of those who prefer getting, to giving for the cause of Christ. The truly benevolent value property, only as the means of forwarding the great object upon which their heart is set. Every thing is esteemed by them in proportion as it relates to and bears upon the Kingdom of Christ. Life, health, time, property, talents, all things, are brought into the service of God, and regarded only as they are the means of promoting His glory, and the good of souls. A truly benevolent

mind places no value upon money for its own sake. It no more desires to hoard up money to gratify and please self, than it would board up chips and stones. In short, it places no earthly value upon money, or any thing else, only as it can be made instrumental in doing good. When, therefore, you see a man that loves to make great bargains, who is engaged in getting all he can, and gives to the poor and to the cause of Christ grudgingly and sparingly, it is a simple matter of fact, that he is a selfish, worldly man, and no Christian at all. In this connection you can see the delusion of that professor of religion, who will be more zealous in seasons of speculation, and enter with more enthusiasm into a money-making enterprise, than into a money-giving enterprise for the cause of Christ.

18. You see the delusion of that professor of religion, who more readily loses the spirit of revival than the spirit of speculation--in other words, whose religious zeal can be cooled down by an opportunity to make money, and who can be driven away from God and prayer, by the opening of navigation, the coming in of the business season, or when any new project of money-making comes up before the public. There are many painful instances, in which professors of religion will seem to bustle about and be active in religion, at seasons of the year when they have little else to do, or when little can be done at money-making; but are ever ready to backslide, and are sure to do so, whenever an opportunity occurs to favor their own interests. But this is almost too plain a case of delusion to need remark.

19. In the light of this subject, you can see that there is no true spirituality without real benevolence of heart and life. Many persons seem to be engaged in a most absurd attempt to keep up spirituality and a spirit of prayer and intercourse with God, while they live and conduct their business upon principles of selfishness. Now nothing can be a greater insult to God, than this--to pray for His Spirit, to attempt to have intercourse with Him, or even pretend to be His friend, while as a matter of fact selfishness is the rule of your life.

20. If "it is more blessed to give than to receive," what infinitely great satisfaction must God take in supporting so great a family. He is pouring out, from His unwasting fulness, an ocean of blessings continually. And what an infinite gratification it must be to His benevolent mind to plan and execute all the good that He is planning, and executing, and will plan and execute to all eternity.

21. We see from this subject, how to understand that declaration concerning Christ, "that for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is for ever set down at the right hand of God." Although multitudes of things connected with the Atonement were in themselves painful, yet, upon the whole, the great work was a source of infinite satisfaction to the Father and the Son. And God is virtuous in the Atonement, just in proportion as he really enjoys the making of it Himself. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;" and we always regard that self-denial as most virtuous, that is exercised most willingly. And where the greatest self-denial is exercised, not only with great willingness, but with great joyfulness, for the sake of doing good to others, we pronounce that the highest degree of virtue. The Father is represented as being well pleased with the conduct of Christ in the Atonement. He was greatly gratified with the virtue of His Son, and to see Him count the work a joyous one, in so freely and joyfully denying Himself to save His enemies from death.

22. If God finds it "more blessed to give than to receive," why should we not abound with every blessing that we need? Why should we, by our narrow-mindedness and unbelief, render it impossible for God to gratify His benevolent heart in giving us great things?

23. You see the secret of all unbelief in prayer. It is our own selfishness. I have already said that a selfish mind finds it difficult to conceive of the true character of God. A selfish man knows that he gives grudgingly; and he very naturally conceives of God, as being altogether such a one as himself. He finds it exceedingly difficult to get hold of the rare and great idea, that God is his exact opposite in this respect--that giving is His happiness--that He has infinitely more satisfaction in giving good things, than we have in receiving them--that He has greater pleasure in giving things, than the most avaricious man on earth has in getting. But it is no wonder that selfish minds are slow to understand and believe this.

24. There is no religion but that which consists in a sympathy with God, in being benevolent as He is benevolent; in having a benevolent disposition--a settled, fixed, abiding disposition to benevolence. 1 John 4:7, 8, 16: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. And he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

## **A Willing Mind Indispensable to a Right Understanding of Truth**

Lecture XIII

July 1, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--John 7:17: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

In discoursing upon this subject I shall show:

*I. That God's promises, with their conditions, are a revelation of the great principles of His government.*

*II. What is implied in a willingness to do the will of God.*

*III. That this state of mind is indispensable to a right understanding of the truth of God.*

*IV. That this state of mind will certainly result in a right knowledge of the truth, unless you tempt God by neglecting the means of knowledge.*

## **I. God's promises, with their conditions, are a revelation of the great principles of His government.**

God is unchangeable. What He does, or promises, or says at one time, He would do, or promise, or say, the circumstances being the same, at all times. Every thing that he does and says, is but a revelation of his character. He knows nothing of favoritism. His regards are always founded in the reason, and nature, and relations of things. He regards all beings and events according to their true nature, character, and relations. His providence, his threatenings, his law, gospel, and promises, only reveal so many great, unchangeable principles of his government. And as He never changes, as there is in Him "no variableness nor shadow of turning," we may rest with the utmost confidence in the fact, that both a promise and its condition, that all the promises with their conditions, are founded in, and are a revelation of the unalterable principles of His government; both the promise and the condition being founded in the nature and relations of things. And that He always holds Himself pledged to fulfill the same promises, under the same or similar circumstances, and upon the same conditions. These are irresistible inferences from his unchangeableness.

## **II. What is implied in a willingness to do His will.**

- 1. It implies implicit confidence in his character. We should have no right to be willing to do the will of God, unless we had reason to confide in the perfection of his will. His character consists in the state of his will. To be willing, therefore, that his will should be done, implies an unwavering confidence, that his will is perfectly right. It implies the ripe conviction on our part, that He is absolutely omniscient, and knows perfectly what He ought to will, or what upon the whole is best to be done, and that his will is for ever and unalterably just what it ought to be.
- 2. It implies supreme love to God. If any other being is loved more than He is, we should feel more desirous to please that being than to please God; for indeed the object, so loved, is in reality our God. A willingness therefore to do the will of God implies a supreme attachment to Him for his own sake, and the supreme desire of pleasing Him.
- 3. It implies a supreme regard to God's authority. It is absurd to say that we are willing to do his will, and yet, that our regard to his authority is not supreme. It is one thing to desire to do his will, and another thing to be willing to do it. It is a common thing for persons to desire what, upon the whole, they do not choose. But to be willing to do God's will, instead of our own or that of any other being, certainly implies a supreme regard to his authority.
- 4. It also implies a supreme desire or willingness in us to do or to be wholly right or wholly conformed to the will of God. It implies an intense desire and willingness to be right on every subject, to have our whole being and all the influences that we exert wholly and perfectly right--to be wholly conformed to the will of God in all the relations we sustain to Him and to the whole Universe--an intense desire and willingness to do and feel exactly right towards ourselves and all other beings.
- 5. It implies an intense desire and willingness to do our utmost to glorify God--to be used all up to his service--to have every power and every moment, and every thing in, about, and belonging to us, wholly devoted to the infinitely important end of glorifying God. It is God's will that we

should be so; and a willingness to do his will implies a willingness in us to be so.

- 6. It implies an intense desire and disposition to avoid whatever is displeasing to Him or contrary to his will--a willingness on our part to submit to any sacrifice, rather than displease Him. If a man would not sacrifice his own life, rather than knowingly to displease God, he is not, in the sense of this text, willing to do his will.
- 7. It implies an intense desire and disposition to know the truth on all subjects--to know whatever concerns our highest interests and usefulness--whatever will contribute to the highest perfection of our body and soul, and to our highest usefulness. In short, it implies an intense desire and willingness to know the whole circle of truth, in relation to our whole being, all our duty, all our influences, and all the will of God concerning us. If there be one subject, relating to the highest perfection of our bodies or souls, or our highest and best influences and usefulness, upon which we are unwilling to be enlightened, upon which we are not intensely desirous to be enlightened, we cannot properly be said to be willing to do the will of God.
- 8. It implies that we have no lust or idol to spare or defend. But on the contrary, that we have wholly renounced idolatry, under every form, and have cast off the dominion of lust, and are wholly devoted to the will of God.
- 9. It implies the renunciation of our own will, and that we have no will except that God's will should be done. It implies the constant yielding up of our will to Him, and that it is the abiding state of our minds, and the constant echo of our hearts, "Thy will--thy will--THY WILL, O God, be done."
- 10. It implies that we have no longer any selfish interest to promote: that we have for ever renounced all idea or desire of setting up any interest of our own, as the end of pursuit, whether a temporal interest or an eternal interest, whether a material or a spiritual interest, and that "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do," is designed by us to promote "the glory of God."
- 11. It implies that we have no longer any appetite or passion to consult or to defend--that we have no desire to pursue our own gratification in any respect as the great end and object of life, and that no appetite and passion is indulged merely for the sake of the indulgence. But that we consider our whole being as God's; that our appetites were created to subserve the highest interests of our being, to be the servants and not the masters of our souls; and that, whether we eat or drink, or sleep or wake, or labor, or rest, lie down, or rise up, or study, or pray, or preach, whatever we do, that all be done from a supreme desire to do the will of God.
- 12. It implies that we have no reputation of our own to maintain or defend; but that, like our Master, we have made ourselves of no reputation--that we have wholly renounced it as of no value, except as connected with the kingdom of Christ, and that we have so entirely given up our good name to Him, as to be willing to have it cast out as evil, or that any thing shall result respecting it that can in the highest manner promote the ultimate glory of God.

- 13. It implies that we have no longer any indulged prejudice to blind our minds, or harden our hearts, to prevent our knowing and doing the will of God. Prejudice is a state in which we make up our mind and commit ourselves, before we are possessed of all the facts. To condemn an author before we have patiently and candidly examined and possessed ourselves of his views, is a very common and injurious form of prejudice. To condemn a person or a sentiment without a most candid examination and hearing of the whole matter, is another odious form of prejudice. A willingness to do the will of God, therefore, implies the giving up of all prejudice on every subject, and a candid throwing of the mind open to conviction, to light, and truth with an entire readiness to follow the will of God, in whatever direction it shall lead us.
- 14. It implies that the love of truth and of God has swallowed up every thing else, and come to be the ruling principle of our whole being--that it is our meat, and our drink, and our life, to do the whole will of God--that a knowledge of his will has, with our minds, the power of omnipotence to sway our minds and carry us all lengths in obedience to it.
- 15. It implies an honest and earnest disposition in us, to be acquainted with all our errors of opinion and practice--a willingness to be searched with the utmost scrutiny--yea, with the scrutiny of omniscience itself, and that we feel the utmost gratitude to any one who will point out to us any thing in which we can, in any respect, be more perfectly conformed to the will of God.
- 16. It implies the greatest abhorrence in us, of whatever shall give over to Satan any part of our influence, time, talents, property, or any thing whatever, that should in any way thwart the will of God.

### **III. This state of mind is indispensable to a right understanding of the truth of God.**

- 1. Because it is indispensable to honest and diligent inquiry. It is certain that a man will never inquire honestly after truth, until he is in an honest state of mind, and that he will not inquire diligently and perseveringly until he is possessed of an intense desire and will to know and do the truth. To suppose the contrary of this is manifestly absurd.
- 2. This state of mind is indispensable to a just appreciation of the value and force of evidence. Certainly it is absurd to say that a mind will justly appreciate the force of evidence, upon any subject upon which it is not upright.
- 3. This state of mind is indispensable to the heart's embracing truth, when it is perceived by the intellect. It is not necessary to suppose that the mind already knows the truth upon every subject, in order to have a disposition to obey it. A mind may be in love with truth for its own sake. In this state it loves all truth upon all subjects. It goes forth with earnest longings in search of truth, and whenever and wherever it finds it, it receives and obeys it with all joyfulness. But unless the heart be in love with truth, it is not honest in the search of it, nor ready to embrace it when apprehended by the intellect.
- 4. It is impossible for the mind to receive the whole truth without this state of heart. Some shreds of truth may be perceived by the mind, and many things about it may be known, while

the heart is in an unsubdued state; but the whole truth in its bearings, relations, tendencies, and results, is never apprehended by an uncandid mind, or by a mind unwilling to know and do it.

**IV. This state of mind will certainly result in a right knowledge of the truth, unless you tempt God by rejecting the means of knowledge.**

- 1. Tempting God may defeat the fulfillment of any promise where our own agency is concerned in its fulfillment. In Acts, 27th chapter, we have an account of the shipwreck of Paul. Here God expressly promised, by Paul, "that there should be no loss of any man's life among them, but of the ship." But when the sailors were about to abandon the ship, Paul informed them that if the sailors did not remain on board their lives could not be saved. The promise was without any condition expressed; yet it implied of course that they should use the best means of which they were possessed to preserve their lives. For the sailors, therefore, to abandon the ship, would be to tempt God; in which case, notwithstanding his promise, they would all be lost. Now it should be for ever understood, that where the conditions of a promise, either expressed or implied, are not complied with, we tempt God, and it is vain to expect their fulfillment.
- 2. We tempt God, when we expect Him to violate the principles of his own government, as revealed in his works, providence, and word. Example: If we neglect to use the means for the accomplishment of any end, and expect Him to bring it about by miracle, this is tempting God.

Again, being less honest, industrious and persevering than we ought to be, in search of truth, is tempting God, and may be expected to result in our remaining in ignorance.

Again, restraining prayer on the subject of divine teaching is tempting God. He has expressly said to us, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." "Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." The conditions upon which we are to be taught the will of God are expressly laid down in Prov. 2:1-9: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous; He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly; He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." Here the conditions are:

- (1.) A willingness to receive and treasure up his words as of great importance.
- (2.) Such a willingness as to incline the ear and apply the heart.
- (3.) Such a willingness as to cry after knowledge and lift up the voice for understanding.
- (4.) Such an intenseness of desire as to seek for her as silver, and search after her as for



hid treasures.

Upon these conditions, it is added, "thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." To neglect any of these means, therefore, and then expect "to know the doctrine whether it be of God," is to tempt your Maker. But,

- 3. If we fulfill the condition, we may expect the fulfillment of the promise, and that we shall surely have whatever of truth is needful for us to know and as fast as we need to know it.
- 4. We are bound to feel assured of this. We are under just as much obligation to feel the inward assurance of it as we are to feel that God will not lie. If we are conscious that we fulfill the conditions, we have no right whatever to doubt. If we are conscious that we do not fulfill the conditions, we have no right to expect it.
- 5. God will teach us as fast as he safely can. "He knows our frame and remembers that we are dust." He knows how easily we are bewildered and overset with being taught too much at once. It is a well known truth that where children are taught too early and too fast, there is a determination of blood to the brain, and great danger of derangement or permanently impaired health. Just so it is with us, God teaches us, if we are His children, and are anxious to be taught as fast as we are able to learn. He said to His disciples, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." They were not enough advanced in religious knowledge. There was not such a providential development of facts and such a degree of the Spirit's influences as to prepare them for the reception of certain great truths which He desired to teach them.
- 6. If we are anxious to do the will of God, on all subjects, with a proper use of means, we may expect His teachings on all subjects that relate to our highest perfection and usefulness--to direct us in regard to our health--the right management of our body--how to restraint its appetites and propensities--how to keep it under and cause it to subserve the highest interests of the soul. In short, there is no subject upon which we need knowledge, upon which we may not confidently expect Him to teach us all that we need to know in the diligent and honest use of means.

## REMARKS.

1. The opinions of a sensualist, or one under the dominion of his appetites and propensities are not to be trusted. He is uncandid and unwilling to know the truth in relation to the self-denying gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. His opinions on the subject of temperance and the true principles of physiological reform, are not to be trusted for the same reason.
3. The opinions of a speculator or worldly minded man are not at all worthy of credit in respect to the application of the law of God to the business transactions of this world. Upon this subject he is not, and remaining a speculator, cannot be in a candid state of mind.

4. Very few persons have so renounced themselves as to be willing to know the whole truth, in regard to all branches of reform.
  5. Very few have so renounced their appetites as to be willing to know and do the truth upon the subject of dietetic reform.
  6. Very few have so renounced self-interest as to be willing to know and do the truth upon the subject of sanctification.
  7. He who has renounced himself will search for light, and hail and embrace it with great joy upon every subject. He will find his soul panting after it with unutterable longings.
  8. He who is willing to do the will of God, will keep hard upon the heels of truth, and practice as fast as he can learn. Truth upon any subject is his law. He no sooner sees than he obeys. His practice and his theory are at one.
  9. Many mistake the absence of felt resistance for a willingness to do the will of God.
  10. There must be a felt willingness, a longing of soul to know the whole truth. Else there is no proper willingness to do the will of God.
  11. We need not expect, as I have already intimated, that God will teach us all the truth at once. When Solomon prayed for wisdom and God informed him that He had given him his desire, it is not to be supposed that he felt at the time as if he had a great enlargement of wisdom. But this wisdom was imparted as he had occasion for it. Soon after his request and the assurance of God that his prayer was granted, the two women came to him with their controversy about the child, at which time wisdom equal to the decision of the question was imparted by God in accordance with His promise. So in our own case. We are to rest and feel assured that when we have occasion for knowledge by a faithful application to Him, in the diligent use of means, we shall surely be instructed.
  12. From this subject it is easy to see that the cavils of infidels against the Christian religion are of no weight. If they were really pious and holy men and gave evidence of being willing to know and do the will of God, they would know of the doctrine whether it be of God.
  13. The same remark is applicable to Universalists. What confidence can be placed in their assertions in respect to the gospel of Christ? Who does not know that as a body, they are ungodly and unholy men?
  14. God often teaches us in ways that greatly agonize and astonish us at the time.
  15. When we pray for divine teaching, we should be entirely reconciled to let God teach us in his own way, cost us what it may. Else we tempt the Spirit of the Lord.
- And now, beloved, are you in a candid state of mind and are you willing to know and do the whole will of God in respect to your whole being? Are you willing to know and do your whole duty, and the

whole truth, cost what it may, on all the great subjects of reform that are before the public? Are you anxious to look through, to understand, to know and do the whole truth on the subject of entire sanctification, abolition, temperance, moral reform? A man is very ill informed who does not see, that as certainly as we are made up of body and soul, physiological and dietetic reform are indispensable to permanent moral reform.

If a man is in an uncandid state of mind on any one subject, he will not know and thoroughly do his duty on any subject. He is in a state of mind that forbids the reasonable expectation that he will. Beware then dearly beloved, I beseech you of committing yourself on the wrong side of any question. I have greatly feared and I may truly say that I have been troubled lest multitudes should do on the subject of entire sanctification, what others have done on subjects of the temperance and moral reform--so commit themselves against the truth as never to know of the doctrine whether it be of God.

And now let me, as I have often done, ask you to go down upon your knees and lay your whole heart open before the Lord. Beseech Him to search you and try your reins and your heart, and see whether you are wholly willing to conform your entire being to the will of God--to do, to say, to be nothing more or less than is for His glory. May the Lord give us grace to know and do His whole will.

## **Death to Sin**

Lecture XIV  
July 15, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Romans 6:7: "For he that is dead is freed from sin."

In the discussion of this subject I shall notice,

*I. The different kinds of death mentioned in the Bible.*

*II. What kind of death is intended here.*

*III. What it consists in;*

*IV. What is implied in it;*

*V. How it is effected.*

## **I. Different kinds of death.**

- 1. Natural death. This is the death of the body.
- 2. Spiritual death. This is death in sin. It is total depravity or a state of entire alienation from God.
- 3. Eternal death. This consists in the endless curse of God.
- 4. Death to sin.

## **II. The kind of death mentioned in the text.**

The death here spoken of is manifestly a death to sin. This is very evident from the context. At the close of the preceding chapter, Paul had been speaking of the super-abounding grace of Christ, and commences the sixth chapter by saying, "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Here Paul is speaking of those who were alive and yet dead to sin. He spoke of their having received a baptism into the death of Christ. By their spiritual baptism they had been solemnly set apart or consecrated to the death of Christ. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." He speaks of them as not only dead, but, by their spiritual baptism buried into the death of Christ. And to carry the idea of their being still farther from the life of sin; he speaks of them as being planted into the likeness of His death, and crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed. And then adds in the words of the text, "Now he that is dead is freed from sin." The term here rendered justification may be rendered "is made righteous."

It is plain from this connection, that Paul is speaking of those who had been so baptized by the Holy Spirit so as to be dead to sin, buried, planted, crucified, as it respects sin.

## **III. What it consists in.**

Summarily, death to sin consists in the annihilation of selfishness, and the reign of perfect love to God and man in the heart and life.

## **IV. What is implied in it.**

- 1. Death to sin is the opposite of death in sin. Death in sin implies living for self, or being dead to God's glory and interests and only alive to our own glory. Death to sin implies the reverse of this. It implies a death to our own interests and happiness as an end of pursuit, and a living wholly to the glory of God, and for the up-building of His kingdom.

- 2. Death in sin implies a will opposed to the will of God. I speak here of a fixed and permanent state of the will in opposition to a single particular volition. A will in this state is not at all influenced by the will of God. It has never submitted to His will, and consequently a knowledge of the will of God is no influential reason to determine its volitions. But death to sin implies a will wholly subservient to and under the control of the will of God. I speak now also of a state of will. One who is dead to sin has no other will than that God's will should in all things be done. Lay before him any question in which he is in doubt in respect to what the will of God is, and he will find himself unable to decide upon a course of action. All he can decide upon in such a case is to search and inquire what is the will of God. But until he is satisfied in some way in respect to the will of God, he is utterly in doubt and finds himself unable to make up his mind and come to any decision in respect to the question before him. This is a state of mind directly opposite to a death in sin. In a state of death in sin, the will of God is not inquired after as the great and only influential motive to decide the will. A man in this state has, as we say, a will of his own. He decides upon his own responsibility, in his own strength, and entirely in view of selfish reasons. While one who is dead to sin, has so submitted himself to the will of God--so bowed his will to God's will, that he decides nothing in view of selfish reasons, and the will of God has come to be the controlling reason or motive of his conduct. Let him but know what is the will of God in the case, and his will is yielding as air. But shut him out from this knowledge, and he is in a state of the utmost perplexity and cannot decide upon any course of conduct. He can only say, "I have no will about it." However uncommon it has been for Christians to come into this state while in life and health, it has not been at all uncommon for them to be in this state while on a death bed. Every one conversant with death bed scenes has probably witnessed such cases of entire surrender of the whole being to the will of God, as that the individual was unable to choose whether to live or die and could only say, "I have no will about it." Not knowing what the will of God was there was no other choice than this, viz. that the will of God, whatever it was, should be done. Ask an individual whether sick or well, living or dying, who is in this state, whether he wills or chooses a certain thing; and if it be a question in respect to which he is in doubt, as to what the will of God is, you will find him to be entirely at a loss. He is conscious of choosing that the will of God should be done. But until he knows whether this or that is the will of God he has no choice about that particular event.

- 3. Death in sin implies a self-indulgent state of mind. To consult ones own ease, happiness, reputation, and interests is natural to him who is dead in sin. If he is on board a steam boat, you will find him ready to contend for the best berth and hastening to obtain the best seat at the first table. If riding in a stagecoach, you will observe him seeking for the best seat. To consult his own comfort, his own indulgence and happiness is the law of his mind. And in ten thousand ways will this state of mind develop itself.

But a death to sin implies a self-denying state of mind, a disposition to give others the preference, a choosing to accommodate others, and bless, and benefit others, at the expense of self-interest or self-indulgence.

- 4. A death in sin implies the real and practical regarding of ourselves as our own. But death to sin is the real and practical regarding of our whole being as God's.

- 5. A death in sin implies the love of our own reputation. Death to sin implies the making of ourselves no reputation as Christ did.
- 6. A death in sin implies the practical regarding of our possessions as our own. Death to sin implies the real and practical regarding of our possessions as God's.
- 7. Death in sin implies the dominion of the flesh and a will in subjection to the flesh. A death to sin implies a subjection of the body to the soul. It implies the keeping the body under and bringing it into subjection, and that all its appetites and propensities are brought into subjection to the will of God.
- 8. A death in sin implies a state of mind that is influenced by sensible objects, by the honors, riches, opinions, and things of this world as much as if its possessor expected to live here forever. Death to sin implies the giving up the world substantially as a dying man gives it up. Its riches, honors, amusements, pursuits, ambition, strifes, and envyings, what are all these to him? If he knows himself to be a dying man, he regards them not. He desires them not. He seeks them not. He does not, cannot, under these circumstances, will to have them. He chooses nothing of this world's goods, but those things that are really necessary for the few hours or moments which remain to him of this life. A little more breath--perhaps a few spoons full of water--a little of the kind attention of his friends are all that is left for him to desire of earthly good. Now death to sin implies this giving up all desire and expectation of the wealth, honors, and selfish pursuits of this world. The man who is dead to sin is as absolutely satisfied with a competency of earthly good as a man is who is on a bed of death. He would no sooner lay his schemes of earthly aggrandizement, or for enlarging and perpetuating his selfish gratification, than a man would upon a bed of death. In a word, he has given up the world as an object of pursuit, as really and emphatically as if he knew himself to be doomed to live but one hour. He has entered upon a new and eternal life. All his plans, desires, and aims are heavenly, and not earthly, sensual or devilish.

#### **V. How this death is effected, or how persons may enter into and exercise this state of mind.**

- 1. Not by the strength of your own resolutions. You will never die to sin by merely resolving to die to sin. It is one of the most common delusions among men to suppose that they can stand against temptation by the strength of their own resolutions. Peter thought himself able to follow Christ even unto death. But his resolution, like all mere human resolutions, failed him just when he most needed its support. A brother said to me the other day, "I have learned this of my resolutions; they are firm enough when there is nothing to overthrow them, and just when I do not need their support. But they always fail me when I do, just when I have a trial that demands their sustaining power, I find they are like air and good for nothing."
- 2. This state of mind is never to be entered into by any unaided efforts of our own. Sin has too long had dominion over us. Our powers are too much enslaved by its protracted indulgence. Sin has too long been our master, to be at once put down by any unaided efforts of ours. But,
- 3. This state of mind is effected by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit does not imply the bestowment of miraculous gifts, as some seem to have supposed. The

Apostles possessed miraculous gifts before they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. The power of miracles may or may not be incidental to spiritual baptism. But it, by no means, constitutes any part of it. Nor does spiritual baptism imply great excitement.

But it does imply such a degree of divine influence as will purify the heart. The New Testament writers manifestly use the term baptism as synonymous with purifying. Water baptism is typical of spiritual baptism. Spiritual baptism is the purifying of the heart by the Holy Spirit. Miraculous gifts, great excitement of mind, great rejoicings, or great sorrowings over sin, may be incidental to spiritual baptism, but they are not essential to it. You that have read the memoir of J. B. Taylor will recollect that on the 23rd of April 1822, while he was engaged in prayer, he felt his whole soul sweetly yielding itself up to God. Such a sweet thorough yielding himself and all his interests for time and eternity, into the hands of God he had never before experienced. Now I suppose that this was the effect of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He ever after remained in a state of mind entirely different from anything he had before experienced.

In receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are by no means passive but eminently active.

This influence is secured by faith. Faith in Christ throws the mind open to the influence of His truth and gives the Spirit the opportunity of so presenting truth as sweetly to bring the entire person under its whole power. Christ administers spiritual blessings, and this is received by taking hold of His promise to baptize with the Holy Spirit, and throwing the mind open to His influences. The baptism of the Apostles, by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, will illustrate what I mean. Christ had promised them that they should be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. They fastened upon this promise, and waited in a constant attitude of prayer and expectation, throwing the door of the mind open to His influence. Now Christ has given to all believers a great many promises of the freeness of the Holy Spirit. He has said that the "Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children." The "water of life" which is so abundantly promised in both the New and Old Testaments is the Holy Spirit. This everyone knows who has attentively considered the real meaning of those promises.

And now if you would enter into this death to sin, you must be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If you would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, you must fasten upon the promises of Christ and take hold of them in faith, laying your whole soul open to receive His influences. Rest with the utmost confidence in His promise to give you of the "fountain of water of life freely." And when you have taken hold of His promise, be sure not to let go or let your confidence to be shaken until you feel a consciousness that "you are baptized into His death."

#### **REMARKS.**

1. In the connection of this text, Paul speaks of himself and others as dead to and freed from sin.
2. If death to sin does not imply entire sanctification, death in sin does not imply total depravity, for they are manifestly opposite states of mind.
3. As death in sin is consistent with persons doing many things which the world regards as righteous,

so death to sin may be consistent with many things which the world would regard as sinful.

4. Paul's history confirms the profession which he here makes of being dead to sin.

5. The circumstances of the primitive Church rendered a death to sin almost inevitable, at least in many instances. The profession of attachment to Christ must inevitably cost many of them all that the world holds or calls dear. They had to enter upon the Christian life by a renunciation of the world, by giving up worldly expectations and pursuits, as much as men do on a bed of death. This state of public sentiment was eminently calculated to facilitate their entrance into a state of spiritual death, and was no doubt a prime reason for their rapid advancement in the divine life.

6. We see why it is that state and other violent persecutions have already greatly contributed to the spirituality of the Church.

7. We see also why it is that state and worldly favor has crippled the energies, and overthrown the purity of the Church.

8. We see how the idea comes to be so prevalent that Christians are not wholly sanctified until death. As a matter of fact, this no doubt generally is true, that Christians are not wholly and permanently sanctified until about the close of life, until they come into that state in which they expect very soon to die. I once knew a good man who was told by his physicians, that in consequence of the enlargement of the large blood vessel near the heart, he was exposed to instant death, and that at all events he must expect to die very soon. This intelligence after the first shock was over, was instrumental in baptizing him into the death of Christ. He very soon entered into a most blessed and heavenly state of mind, let go of the world, and seemed to stand looking and waiting with most heavenly serenity for the coming of the Son of Man. In this state of mind, he was informed after a while, that he might probably live for a long time, notwithstanding his disease. This so staggered him as to well nigh bring him again into bondage. Not seeming to understand the philosophy of the state of mind in which he was, and how to remain in it by simple faith, he staggered and groaned under this intelligence till Christ, true to His promise, interposed and set his feet upon eternal rock. After this he lived and died to the wonder of all those around him, few if any of whom perhaps, so much as dreamed that his state of mind was what is intended by a death to sin.

9. Payson and multitudes of good men have found it easy to enter into this state of mind when all expectation was relinquished of remaining longer in this world. But it seems impossible or difficult for most persons to conceive, that this state of mind may be really entered into, with a prospect of any amount of life still before us.

10. But there is no need of waiting until the close of life before we die to sin. We have only to thoroughly let go of all selfish schemes and projects whatever, and give ourselves as absolutely up to the service of God, as much as we expect to when we come to die, and we enter at once into this infinitely desirable state of mind.

11. If persons have entered into this state of mind, new trials may call for fresh baptisms of the Spirit. While we are in this world of temptation, we are never beyond the reach of sin and never out of



danger. If selfishness could be called into exercise in holy Adam, how much more so in those who have lived so long under the dominion of selfishness? If a man has been intemperate or licentious although these appetites and propensities may be subdued, yet it behooves him to keep out of temptation's way; and renewed temptation calls for fresh and more powerful baptisms of the Holy Spirit. Be not satisfied then with one anointing. But look day by day for deeper draughts of the water of life.

12. If we allow any form of sin to live, it will have dominion. It must be wholly exterminated or it will be our ruler. The principle of total abstinence in regard to sin is wholly indispensable to the reign of spiritual life.

Let us then, beloved, not rest satisfied until we are conscious that we are dead and buried, by spiritual baptism into Christ's death, until we are planted in the likeness of His death; and so crucified with Him that the body of death is fully destroyed.

## **The Gospel the Savor of Life or of Death**

Lecture XV

July 29, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--2 Cor. 2:14-17: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things: for we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

In remarking upon this text, I will endeavor to show:

*I. That God has great delight in the Atonement of Christ.*

*II. That a full exhibition of Christ must do great good, whether men are saved or lost.*

*III. That such an exhibition of Christ will produce great and manifest changes in the character of those who hear.*

*IV. That God will be as truly honored in the damnation of those who reject, as in the salvation of those who receive Christ.*

## **I. God has great delight in the Atonement of Christ.**

- 1. From scripture testimony, Phil. 2:5-11:--"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

From this passage, it appears that God was highly pleased with the Atonement of Christ Jesus, on account of which "He highly exalted Him, or gave him a name above every name."

Isaiah, 53:10-12:--"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him: He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, , He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out his soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Here also God is represented as being so pleased with the Atonement of Christ as to give Him a great reward for his labor of love.

The text also contains the same doctrine, and multitudes of other passages that might be noticed.

- 2. God has great delight in the Atonement of Christ, because he sincerely desires the salvation of men. He knew it was impossible to save them upon the principles of his government, without an Atonement. And his delight in the Atonement of Christ, as the means of their salvation, is equal to his desire for their salvation.
- 3. The self-denial of Christ must have been greatly pleasing to his Father. What virtuous father would not consider himself as greatly honored by the exhibition of such a spirit as Christ manifested in dying for his enemies? When God saw his Son willing to leave the realms of glory, to take upon Him the form of a servant, to deny Himself even unto death, for the sake of making the salvation of his enemies possible, this must have been infinitely pleasing to a God of love.
- 4. His whole life and death under the circumstances in which He lived and died, must have been infinitely pleasing to God--his life, under circumstances of such trial, so spotless, so meek, so just like God, such an exhibition and illustration of what God is--his death, so submissive, so

Godlike, it must have come up before his Father "as an odor of a sweet smell."

- 5. The bearing of the Atonement upon the universe, must have given it great value in the sight of God. But I shall enlarge upon this thought under the next head, viz.:

## **II. A full exhibition of Christ must do great good, whether men are saved or lost.**

- 1. Because it fully reveals and demonstrates the infinitely great love of God to the universe. Should the province of an earthly monarch be betrayed into rebellion by slander, and the insinuation of selfishness in the government, would it not be highly honorable to the sovereign, instead of sending forth his armies, to crush and slay them, to send forth his son to expostulate, instruct, and insure them of the disinterested love and good-will of the government toward them. Now suppose that this son, associated with the father in the government, should go forth, not at the head of an army, but alone, unarmed, unattended, unprotected, should go from town to town, on foot, taking unwearied pains to instruct them, healing their diseases, spending whole nights in prayer for them, and when persecuted in one town should go to another--suppose that he should continue this course of teaching, of expostulation, and of prayer, and when at last they rose to murder him, should meekly suffer himself to be crucified, rather than injure a hair of any man's head, would not such a demonstration as this, of the love and disinterestedness of the government, greatly confound its enemies, and greatly honor the sovereign? Who cannot see that it certainly would?
- 2. A full exhibition of the Atonement, must do great good whether sinners are saved or lost, because it fully contradicts the slander by which our race were drawn off from their allegiance to God. The serpent instigated our first parents to rebellion by insinuating that God was selfish, in prohibiting their eating of a certain tree. It was necessary therefore, that this slander should be thoroughly repelled and refuted. The infinitely great and disinterested love of God exhibited in the Atonement is the most impressive refutation of it.
- 3. The full exhibition of the Atonement of Christ must do great good because it fully justified God as having acted all along, under the influence of the most perfect love, and condemns sin as infinitely unreasonable, inexcusable, and abominable.
- 4. Such an exhibition of the Atonement must do great good because it demonstrates God's great willingness and desire to save his enemies, whether they will be saved or not. It rolls the responsibility of their salvation or damnation upon themselves. It proves that while they have forfeited their lives, God has no desire to take this forfeiture at their hands. It proves that while they deserve to die, He has no pleasure in their death.
- 5. The full exhibition of the Atonement manifests the great value of their happiness in his estimation, and his great reluctance to punish them--that his love for them was so great as to give his only begotten Son to die for them--that He accounted the death, even of his own Son, as a less evil than their destruction, notwithstanding they so infinitely deserved to be destroyed.
- 6. A full exhibition of the Atonement of Christ must do great good, whether sinners are saved or lost, because it must establish forever the confidence of all holy beings in God. But for the

Atonement, the universe might have been open to the surmise at least, that there was possibly something not exactly right in the dealings of God with the inhabitants of this world. But the disinterested love of God, manifested in the Atonement, must forever put his character entirely and infinitely beyond all suspicion.

- 7. A full exhibition of the Atonement of Christ must do great good to the universe, whether sinners are saved or lost, because it reveals to sinners, to the whole world, and to the universe, the sincerity of God, by exhibiting the fulness of the provisions of grace. It demonstrates that the provisions are ample, that there is love and grace enough in God's heart, and ample fulness in the provisions of the gospel for the salvation of every sinner, and this stops every mouth, and leaves the damnation of every sinner, to be wholly chargeable upon himself.

### **III. Such an exhibition of Christ must produce great and manifest changes in the character of those who hear.**

- 1. Because they cannot but receive or reject it. If they receive it, it will of course make them holy, fill them with love to God and men, and mold their whole character into the image of Christ. If they reject it, it must greatly confirm their selfishness and depravity, greatly harden their hearts, and place them in an attitude of greater, and more daring, and odious, and shameless rebellion than before.
- 2. Such an exhibition of God as is made in the Atonement, must of necessity either subdue or greatly aggravate the spirit of rebellion and hostility of his government. It is impossible that it should not be so. If this exhibition of love does not subdue a sinner, it is because of his unbelief. And he cannot disbelieve the infinite and disinterested love of God, in view of the Atonement, without virtually charging God with the most abominable hypocrisy, and with every thing that is hateful. His soul must take this attitude, or it must consent to the truth as it is revealed in the Atonement. Now the consent of the heart to this truth must fill the soul with love, and the life with holy conformity to his law. But the rebellion of the heart against this truth, must greatly deepen and strengthen, and forever confirm the reign of sin in the heart and life.
- 3. Such a great change of feeling as must necessarily result from an understanding of the Atonement of Christ, must be manifest in the temper and life. With but little knowledge of God, sinners may proceed in the indulgence of their lusts, without being sensible of any direct hostility to God. But when He reveals his love to them in the Atonement, they must necessarily either take strong ground against Him, or repent, abandon their sin, and give up their whole being to his influence. This knowledge must necessarily produce an immense change in the temper of their mind toward God. Before, they knew and perhaps thought but little of Him. But after understanding the Atonement, they cannot but know and think much of Him. And the attitude of their minds must be that of ferocious resistance and rebellion, or of gentle and Christ-like obedience. Such a change of the temper as this, must and will manifest itself in some way in the life.
- 4. When Christ is fully preached, persons must be fully subdued, or confirmed in sin. I say FULLY preached. It is amazing to see how many sinners have sat under what is supposed to be the gospel, and yet have little more knowledge of Christ than a heathen. They have never as yet

conceived the idea of the love of God, as exhibited in the Atonement, and remain as quiet, and as self-complacent as a Pharisee, without ever being stirred up on the one hand, to opposition, or on the other, to submission. But when Christ is so exhibited as to force home light upon the sinner's conscience, and compel him fully to understand the doctrine of Atonement, the offices, relations, and love of Christ, as a sin pardoning, and sin subduing Savior, the soul must be soon subdued, or confirmed in sin.

#### **IV. God will be as truly honored in the damnation of those who reject, as in the salvation of those who receive Christ.**

- 1. Because it will be known He did all the nature of the case admitted, to save those who are lost--that when they had forfeited their lives, He took not the forfeiture at their hands. But when they infinitely deserved damnation, He pitied and spared, and sent his Son to die for them--that they refused salvation either by the law or gospel--that they would neither obey the law, nor repent and be forgiven--that nothing that infinite love could do for them, could persuade them to accept salvation.
- 2. His sending them to hell after manifesting so great a desire to save them, will most impressively demonstrate and illustrate his holiness and justice. So great was his pity and love for them, that He would sooner die Himself, in their behalf, than send them to hell, and yet so great is his holiness and justice, that when they refuse salvation upon the only principles that can reconcile justice and mercy, he does not hesitate to send them to the depths of hell. If an earthly sovereign should order his own children to execution, for rebellion against the laws, would not this be an impressive exhibition of his regard to public order, and of attachment to the principles of his government? What an amazing reluctance did God manifest in the Atonement, to sending sinners to hell. And after such an exhibition of bleeding mercy, if He is obliged to send them to hell, how infinitely honorable to Him, will be such an exhibition of his Holiness and Justice.
- 3. The damnation of the finally impenitent, will greatly increase public confidence in God. What a glorious magistrate is this, how infinitely desirous to avoid public execution, and yet so attached to the principles of his government, so in love with order, so high and holy in his regard to the public interests as to sentence his own children to an eternal hell, if they persist in rebellion, and those very children for whom his love is so great as to have laid down his own life for them! What must the universe think of a sovereign that could do this! What an infinitely holy and glorious king is this! And how must such an exhibition as this establish forever the confidence of all holy beings in Him and his government.
- 4. The damnation of the wicked, as rejecters of the gospel, will give to the law of God great power. The death of Christ has magnified the law, and made it honorable, has manifested God's great regard for it, and demonstrated that, sooner than repeal it, or suffer it to be trampled under foot, he would have his own Son to die, that a way might be opened for setting aside its penalty in consistency with the honor of its precept. The damnation of the wicked, will greatly strengthen the power of his law, by showing that so high is God's regard for it, that when so costly an expedient for setting aside its penalty had failed to subdue the sinner, he would execute his penalty upon him notwithstanding his love and compassion for him, were infinitely

great.

## REMARKS.

1. This subject sets in a strong light, the error of those who represent God the Father as being angry with Christ, and as seeking his vengeance upon Him, and all such like representations. On the other hand God says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Instead of God's being angry with Christ, He was infinitely pleased with Him for undertaking the work of redemption.
  2. From this subject, we see that sinners cannot rob God of his glory. Sinner, you need not suppose that the Atonement will be lost to the universe, although you reject it. It may be worse than lost to you. But to God and to the universe, it will not be lost. Not one drop of the blood of Christ was shed in vain. And whether you accept the Atonement or not, God's government shall receive the full benefit of Christ's Atonement.
  3. We see the mistake of those who hold to a limited Atonement, and alledge as a main argument in its support, that if Christ died for all men, He died in vain for those who are finally lost, and that such a provision were vain and useless. Now this goes upon the supposition that the exhibition of God in the Atonement, is to have no bearing upon his character and government in any other world than this. Nay, it is founded in such a contracted view of the moral bearings of the Atonement, as even not to see that in the estimation of those who are saved, a real provision for those who reject, would be infinitely honorable to God.
  4. From this subject we see that the value of the Atonement, is not at all to be estimated by the number saved. If not one sinner was saved--if all mankind persisted in rejecting it, the exhibition of that love which is made in the Atonement, would be infinitely important to the universe, in confirming holy beings, and strengthening the power of his government.
  5. We see that the usefulness of ministers to the government of God, is not at all to be estimated by the number of persons saved under their ministry. Look at the text, "for" says the Apostle, "we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of life unto life, and to the other the savor of death unto death."
- If then ministers fully exhibit Christ, God is as truly honored when men reject, and are damned, as when they believe, and are saved. They cannot but be useful to the universe in proportion to their faithfulness. Their usefulness respects God and his government. To the sinner they may be "a savor of death unto death." But unto God they are "a sweet savor of Christ not only in them that are saved, but in them that perish." They hold forth the love of God in Christ. In this God is glorified, and Christ is preached, in which they "do rejoice and will rejoice," and in which all holy beings will rejoice; sinner, whether you are saved or lost.
6. The opposition excited by preaching Christ, will as really glorify God, as the holiness produced by it. I say nothing of the degree in which the one or the other will glorify God. But that in both God will be really glorified. If the preaching of Christ produces holiness, God will be glorified by it. If sinners rise up and oppose, it will only further illustrate the nature of sin, and the character of sinners, and more impressively illustrate his justice in their damnation.

7. Neither God nor ministers aim at the damnation of sinners, nor rejoice in their destruction, when they are sent to hell. But they do rejoice in the triumph of justice, in that infinitely glorious exhibition of God's character, which is made in their destruction.
8. The more singly and earnestly God and ministers desire and labor for the salvation of sinners, the more their final damnation, if they are lost, will glorify God. If God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost--if ministers and Christians all labor earnestly and honestly, and with all long suffering for the salvation of sinners, and they will not be saved, then sinner, remember when you go weeping and wailing along down the sides of the pit, God's justice will be the more glorious, by how much the greater pains have been taken to save you.
9. To promote the salvation of men and to honor God in their damnation, ministers must have strong and manifest sympathy with God. The more strongly they sympathize with God the more fully will they exhibit his great desire to save men. And the more fully they exhibit God the more thoroughly do they strip the sinner of all excuse and show that his damnation is imperiously demanded by the principles of eternal righteousness.
10. Ministers glorify God in proportion as they preach or exhibit the whole gospel. If they pour out before the sinner the whole heart of Christ, if they exhibit Him in all his love, relations and offices, if they unveil the fulness of his compassion and grace, they are removing the sinner infinitely far from all excuse, and rendering his damnation at every step, a more illustrious and impressive exhibition of the holiness of God.
11. Opposition to the preaching of Christ is to be expected though not desired. Though the damnation of the sinner will glorify God, yet his salvation is to be preferred, as his salvation would glorify God, to say the least, as much as his damnation. In addition to which his salvation is a real good in itself, and a good which God and all holy beings greatly desire.
12. But if sinners will oppose, ministers should not be discouraged by it and feel as if they were doing no good. My brother, if you are really preaching Christ, exhibiting Him in your pulpit, in your life, and in all your ways, you are certainly doing good and great good, to the universe, and greatly glorifying God. If every sinner in your congregation goes down to hell, be not discouraged, my brother. "Hold up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees." But do you say my compassions are moved for them, I cannot bear to be to them a savor of death unto death. How shall I meet them in the Judgment and see them sent to hell--my neighbors, the people of my prayers and my tears, the souls for whom my heart has groaned, and agonized, and bled. My brother, God pities them more than you do. Christ's heart has bled for them more than yours. They are the people for whom He has not only prayed and wept, but for whom He has actually died. How shall he meet them in the Judgment, and weep over them as He did over Jerusalem, and say, "O sinners, sinners, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not. O that thou hadst known the things that belong to thy peace. But now are they hidden from thine eyes." "How shall I give thee up? How shall I deliver thee? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." O my brother lift up your thoughts to the compassionate but infinite holiness and firmness of Christ. He knew how

these sinner would treat his Atonement. Notwithstanding He would die for them. He knew that He should be to them a savor of death unto death; yet He knew that He should greatly glorify God by dying for them and offering them mercy.

And now my brother, be willing to exhibit in your body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Be willing to make up in your self-denying labors and sufferings, for their salvation, the sufferings of Christ that remain, that through you, God may be glorified, that you may be "unto God a sweet savor of Christ both in them that are saved and in them that perish."

13. Here we have the true ground of consolation, when we see men hardening under our ministry. If in revivals of religion, we estimate the good that is really done, by the number of conversions only, we overlook one important item, in the amount of glory that shall redound to God. The truth is, that in revivals of religion, ministers are not only a sweet savor of Christ in them that are converted, but also in them that are hardened. To the one class they are "a savor of life unto life, and to the other of death unto death." In both these classes God is greatly glorified.

14. Every one may know, and is bound to know what effect the gospel is producing on himself, and whether it is to him the "savor of life unto life or of death unto death."

15. We should observe what its effect is upon our families, and narrowly watch its influence upon the minds of all around us, and lay ourselves out with all our might, to make it the savor of life unto life. But if through the perverseness of the sinner's heart, he will make it the savor of death unto death, let us rejoice not in his hardness nor in his destruction, but in the fact that the holiness and justice of God will be the more gloriously illustrated in his damnation.

16. And now sinner where are you? Did you ever realize the circumstances of awful solemnity and responsibility in which God has placed you? Do you know what you are doing? Do you understand the relation which the gospel ministry sustains to you? Do you not tremble when you see your minister, and know that God has unalterably ordained that he shall be unto you the "savor of life unto life, or of death unto death"? Do you know that he is the messenger of God to your poor soul?--and that you can no more prevent his being to you a savor of life or death, than you can prevent your own existence. Sinner, Christ has not died in vain. Ministers do not preach in vain. Christians do not pray in vain. The Holy Spirit does not strive in vain. Heaven from above does not call in vain. Hell from beneath does not warn in vain. God's mercies are not in vain. All these influences are acting upon you. They will act, they must act. They must be to you the "savor of life unto life or of death unto death." How infinitely solemn and awful are your circumstances. How dreadful your responsibility! How short your life! How near your death! Are you prepared for solemn judgment? Sinner will you go down instantly on your knees, and offer up your whole being to God, "before wrath comes upon you to the uttermost"?



# Christians The Light of the World

Lecture XVI  
August 12, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Matt. 5:14-16: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

I shall show,

*I. That the world is in great spiritual darkness.*

*II. That Christians, under God, are to enlighten it.*

*III. How they are to do this.*

*IV. If the world is not enlightened, it is the fault of Christians.*

## **I. The world is in great spiritual darkness.**

- 1. Impenitent sinners are universally ignorant of the true God. Many of them may have a correct theory in some respects. But after all they know not God. To know God and Jesus Christ, is to have eternal life. And while in their sins, they have no correct apprehension of the true God.
- 2. They are in great darkness in respect to the spirituality of his law. If they understood the spirituality of his law, they would understand something of his character and of their own. The truth is they have no correct apprehensions of the true spirit and meaning of God's law.

And here let me say that when we speak of the spirituality of God's law, there are many minds who seem to turn away from us as if we were speaking very mystically. What, they say, law is law. We can understand what God's law says as well as you can, and do understand it as well as you do. And why should you mystify and speak of its spirituality as if it had some occult meaning which none but the initiated can understand? To this I reply:

- (1.) That to be sure, law is law.
- (2.) That every law has its letter and its spirit: i.e. the general statement of its propositions in words is its letter; the true intent and meaning of it, in its real application to every state

of facts, is its spirit. Now the world are in total darkness in respect to the true meaning of the law of God. E.g. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Now this command has both its letter and its spirit. And so has every commandment of God. Its letter prohibits all idolatrous worship. Its spirit requires supreme, disinterested, universal, perpetual love to God, with every holy affection carried out in every holy action.

As a farther illustration, take the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." The letter of this commandment, prohibits the secret taking of another's property, and using it as if it were our own, without intention of returning it. But the spirit of this commandment forbids all covetousness and requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. It prohibits our using our neighbor's good, selfishly, whether with or without his consent. It prohibits every form of fraud, speculation, and taking any advantage in business, that is inconsistent with the royal rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Now who does not know that unconverted sinners are in the dark in regard to the spirituality of these and every other command of God. What horrible conviction and consternation would fill the world if sinners but thoroughly understood the spirituality of God's law.

- 3. Sinners are ignorant of themselves. They know very little of their own constitution, and in most cases still less of their character. This ignorance of their own character is a natural consequence of their ignorance of the law of God. Being ignorant of the true intent and meaning of the standard with which they are to compare themselves, they are of course utterly mistaken in regard to their true character. Judging of themselves only in the light of the letter, and overlooking the breadth of the spirit of the law, they of course form an estimate of their character altogether different from the true one.
- 4. Sinners are altogether ignorant of their true desert. Being ignorant of the spirituality of the law, they know not either the number or the exceeding demerit of their sins.
- 5. Sinners know not their own helplessness, nor do they understand the remedy which God has provided for healing their souls. They neither care for, nor know but little about the remedy, because they are ignorant of their disease.
- 6. Sinners are ignorant of what is really good for them, and what will in the highest manner promote their own well being, both in time and eternity.
- 7. Consequently they are pursuing exactly the course, that must eventually and necessarily result in their everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

## **II. Christians, under God, are to enlighten the world.**

- 1. Because they have the true light. They know God. They understand the spirituality of his law. They know the character of man. They know his guilt, desert, helplessness, and necessities. They have seen their own ignorance, and know that the world is in darkness and lieth in

wickedness. They have the most certain knowledge of this, and the best of all knowledge, that of their own experience. They also know the remedy for sinners. They have been enlightened by the true light. True Christians have all been taught of God. They know God and Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal. They are conscious of so knowing him as to have eternal life abiding in them. They can truly say, from their own consciousness, "Where as I was blind, now I see." They then are the persons, and the only persons in all the world, that are capable of enlightening the world. It is in vain for unconverted philosophers or statesmen, or any unconverted persons whatever to talk of enlightening the world. The light that is in them is great darkness. And when they talk of enlightening the world, they know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. They speak at random, and deceive their followers. They are blind leaders of the blind, and they all stumble on together upon the dark mountains, till teachers and disciples fall into the pit of destruction together.

- 2. The world must be enlightened through human instrumentality. Constituted as men are, truth must address them through the medium of the senses. Consequently God found it necessary to unite Himself with human nature in order to enlighten men. Taking to Himself human nature, He lived, and conversed, and ate, and drank, and held conversation with men through the medium of his human nature. And this possessed their minds of the true idea of who and what He is. He exhibited in his own life, and in all his deportment, the spirit of his own law. By his teachings, but more especially by his life, He called the attention of men away from the letter to the spirit of his law, and when He gave them precepts, He gave them illustrations of their meaning in his own example, and thus possessed their minds of the nature of true religion, and what it was to love their neighbor as themselves.
- 3. None have had the true light but those who have received it through the instrumentality of the saints of God. From the earliest period of man's existence, God has caused the light to shine upon the world through human beings. Sometimes He has had but few representatives on earth. And gross darkness has covered the whole face of the earth, except here and there a little spot has been lighted up, by some pulpit and saint of God. Noah was a light to the old world in its worst estate. Daniel was a light in the idolatrous court of Nebuchadnezzar. Prophets and holy men have been scattered up and down in the earth enough to preserve the true knowledge of God, to a greater or less extent, through these representatives. The Lord Jesus Christ, first in his forerunner John, next in his own person, afterwards in his apostles, and now in all his saints, is enlightening the world. His people are now the medium through which He discovers Himself to mankind. His spirit dwells in them "working in them to will and to do of his good pleasure." They are his disciples who teach his doctrines, exhibit his spirit, and thus at once rebuke and enlighten the darkness of the world.

### **III. How Christians can enlighten the world.**

Under this head I inquire what constitutes the Christian's light, or what renders him a light to others?  
Ans.

- 1. It is not simply his creed.
- 2. Not simply his profession.

- 3. Nor is it his profession and creed together.
- 4. Not his sanctimonious appearance on the Sabbath.
- 5. Nor his sitting at the communion table.
- 6. Nor does his light consist in all these together. But,
- 7. His light consists in his temper and spirit.
- 8. In his good works in a most strict regard to the universal law of love. As Christ did, so does the Christian. His life is a commentary upon the law of God. He is giving continual illustrations in his own temper and spirit and life, of the spirituality, the true intent and meaning of the law of God.
- 9. In his practical and firm opposition to all that is unholy or injurious to the souls or bodies of men, and in the manifestation of his undying attachment, to whatever is holy, lovely and of good report.

Christians then can enlighten the world, not

- 1. By conforming to whatever is wrong in their tempers, views or practices--not by any direct or indirect connivance at their sins, worldly mindedness, or whatever is the result of their darkness.
- 2. Not by any compromise of principle or by conciliating their favor, by keeping out of view the points of difference between themselves and sinners. Some professors of religion seem disposed to avoid all controversy with impenitent men, to lessen as far as possible the differences of opinion, and views, and practices between themselves and sinners. They seem to think that the true way to enlighten them, is by falling in with them as far as possible and by conforming in a great measure to their customs, views, business practices, and almost every thing else. Now this is as far as possible from the true philosophy of enlightening the world. It is as if you attempted to clear the eye-sight of your neighbor by putting out your own eyes. It is like attempting to pull the mote out of your neighbor's eye, not by plucking the beam out of your own eye, but by filling your own eye both with beams and motes. If you wish to convince a man that he is in the dark, you must hold up your own light, in contrast with his darkness. If he can see your light, it will discover his own darkness.
- 3. Christians can never enlighten the world by any thing that will imply that they lay but little practical stress upon the points of difference between them and sinners. It is in vain to attempt to enlighten the world by any course of conduct that is calculated to make the impression that the real difference between saints and sinners lies merely or mostly in opinion, if after all the practices of Christians are such as demonstrate that their opinions have very little to do with practice. But,

- 4. Christians can enlighten the world by holding up the light of their own example on all subjects in strong and constant contrast with the example of the ungodly.
- 5. They can enlighten the world by a patient and firm perseverance in well doing, in spite of all the opposition of earth and hell. To what a wonderful extent did the Apostles and primitive Christians succeed in enlightening the world. This was a thing of course. Their lives were a perpetual light, dissipating the moral darkness around them. They did not hold forth a flickering, waving, and uncertain light. It was clear, steady, pure, and had well nigh banished darkness from the earth. In the text Christ says, "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "So shine." How? Ans. By exhibiting our good works in contrast with their evil works, and that continually.
- 6. By exhibiting our self-denial, in contrast with their self-indulgence, and that continually.
- 7. By exhibiting our heavenly mindedness, in contrast with their worldly mindedness.
- 8. By showing that our conversation is in heaven, in contrast with their showing that their conversation is of earth.
- 9. By showing that our treasure is in heaven, in contrast with their showing that their treasure is on earth.
- 10. By showing our conformity to correct principles, in contrast with their disregard of them.
- 11. By showing our conformity to the laws of our being, in contrast with their shameless violations of them.
- 12. By manifesting our faith in Christ, in contrast with their unbelief.
- 13. By manifesting our sweet submission to all the providential dealings of God, in contrast with their restlessness and rebellion against his providence.
- 14. By holding up on every subject and in every way, both by precept and example, the light of truth in opposition to their darkness. In these and in similar ways can Christians enlighten the world. But by blinding the light, by making any compromise, by frittering away the points of difference, by going one hair's breadth aside from the love of truth, for the sake of conciliating their favor, they will not, and never can enlighten them.

#### **IV. If the world is not enlightened, it is the fault of Christians.**

- 1. Because Christians have the means of enlightening the world. They have the gospel and the means of spreading it throughout the world. They have the true light in their own hearts, and have the means of exhibiting it to all mankind.
- 2. They have abundant opportunities to enlighten the world. God has stationed them in different

parts of the world, for the very purpose of enlightening the world. He has commanded them to go, and given them the means of going and holding up their light in every dark corner of the world. When the early Christians clung together in Jerusalem, he scattered them in all countries by the force of a persecution. And they "went every where preaching the gospel." And being thus scattered, they learned the true philosophy of enlightening and converting the world.

- 3. The world is expecting and looking to Christians to enlighten them. The eyes of ungodly men are turned to the Church, and marking their example, taking knowledge of their lives, spirit, and ways, and wherever among professors, there is a true Christian, his light is seen, as a matter of fact, to rebuke the darkness around him.
- 4. If the world is not enlightened, it is the fault of Christians, because, if the truth is properly and fully exhibited, it will dispel their darkness. The human mind is so constituted that truth "commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." There is no mistake about this. The human mind is true to its own laws. And when truth is clearly, strongly, and constantly exhibited, it will and must rebuke the darkness of any human mind.
- 5. The principal business which Christians have in this world is, to enlighten the world. Christ has gone to heaven. He has left Christians as his representatives, to carry out the revelation of God and shine as lights in the world. If He should take all Christians immediately from the world, it would leave the world in impenetrable and hopeless darkness, notwithstanding all that has been done to enlighten it. These must be illustrations of religious truth. The minds of men are so dark, they are prone to view religious truth so much in the abstract, and as so purely a matter of opinion, that without living illustrations, truth seldom, if ever gains possession of their minds.
- 6. Christians are in fault, if the world is not enlightened, because they can have any degree of spiritual illumination which they need to carry forward and complete the enlightening of the world. Christ has promised you the Holy Spirit, and has told you that God "is more willing to give it than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children." Every needed aid is abundantly guaranteed by the same promise of God to Christians. And in full view of these exceeding great and precious promises Christ has said to them, "Ye are the light of the world." And now, "let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, [not merely hearing your good doctrines, but seeing your good works,] may glorify your Father who is in heaven.
- 7. Nothing can prevent your enlightening the world, but a refusal on your part to perform good works. If you perform good works men will see them. If they see them they will be constrained to glorify your Father which is in heaven. If then men are not enlightened, it is because you do not perform good works. In other words, it is because you are not Christians. Observe Christ does not say, ye ought to be the light of the world. But "Ye are the light of the world." As the mind of Christ is true, real Christians are the light of the world. And this is a matter of fact. True Christians have the spirit of Christ, for the possession of this spirit is what constitutes them Christians. The spirit of Christ will always manifest itself in performing the works of Christ. If therefore men do not see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in

heaven, it is only because you have the form, and not the spirit of Christianity. And "if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness."

## REMARKS.

1. How much evil is done by temporizing and keeping out of view the great and numberless points of difference between Christianity and the spirit of the world, as if we could show ungodly men the necessity of a great and radical change in themselves, by as nearly conforming our lives and tempers to theirs as possible. It is only by strong and constant contrast that the conviction of the necessity of a radical change in themselves, is to be forced home upon them. The more striking and constant this contrast, the better: the more universal and perfect this contrast is, the more sudden and irresistible will be their conviction of the necessity of a great and radical change in themselves.

2. We see from this subject how utterly injudicious it is to conceal the true light, on any great subject of reform, whenever a favorable opportunity should present itself to hold it up. Some ministers and professors of religion, seem to be always waiting to have the people find out the truth themselves, and for such a public sentiment to be formed as will anticipate and render it popular to hold up any heretofore unpopular or offensive doctrine. They seem not inclined to go ahead and rebuke the darkness of the public mind, by holding up the true light. They seem to dread the loss of their own popularity, and as they say, fear to injure their usefulness, by calling things by their right names, by declaring their own experience of the power of the gospel of the blessed God, by at once preaching and bringing out the whole truth before the world. In order to render themselves popular with all parties, they will so hold forth certain unpopular truths, as that the already initiated, will perceive that they believe them and correctly teach them: but in such language, with such provisos and caveats as that none others will suspect them of believing or teaching any such thing. If the whole Church and congregation were but to get right, without their instrumentality, if a public sentiment should be formed that would invite their coming out in plain language, they would then become bold champions for the truth. But they are waiting for the Churches to learn the truth before they declare it to them. And when it becomes popular to tell the whole truth, they will be the first to tell it.

3. The same is true of multitudes of professing Christians, in respect to their lives. For their worldly-mindedness, and for all forms and degrees of conformity to the world, they plead the force of public sentiment, that it will not do to differ from every body else, and that the law of expediency demands of them a good degree of conformity to the world, in order to secure an influence over them. But is this the way to enlighten the world? Instead of setting yourself to correct public opinion, do you suffer yourself to become the mere creature of it? Instead of opposing what is wrong in the views and practices of mankind, on every subject, do you fall in with them, and thus strengthen their bands, and confirm them in their darkness, expecting that by and by public sentiment will change so that you can do your duty without losing your influence, so that you can declare what God has done for your soul, relate your experience of the power of his grace, and hold up your light in the midst of the acclamations of the crowd? What a delusive dream is this!

4. Christians should remember that silence on any great subject of moral reform, that hiding their light either in precept or example, when a suitable opportunity occurs for exhibiting it, implies either that they do not believe it, or that it is with them a mere matter of opinion, and that they lay little or no practical stress upon it. Or else it implies that they are ashamed of it.

5. How cruel it is to let people remain in darkness through a fear of losing our own popularity. On what multitudes of subjects, are people injuring both their bodies and their souls for lack of correct information. And how shameful and cruel it is for those who have the true light, to hide it.

6. We see from this subject, the importance of believers in the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, holding up this infinitely important doctrine, both by principle and example, whenever they have the opportunity. They should be "living epistles known and read of all men."

7. Unless Christians hold up the true light in contrast with the world's darkness, they are the greatest curses that are in the world. They are like a false light, that decoys the unwary mariners upon the rocks and quicksands. The world knows that you are professors of religion, that you are set as a moral lighthouse. They therefore think it safe to steer in the direction in which your light indicates that they should go. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, what a curse are you to your family, your neighborhood, and the world around you. They will look at you. They mark your words. They ponder well your temper, and spirit, and life. They feel themselves safe in copying your example, in drinking in of your spirit, and in steering their course to eternity, by your light. And what a cruel monster are you, if you mislead them. What do you say of pirates who erect a false light upon some shoal, to decoy the unwary mariners to dash upon it, for the sake of plunder? Does not your blood curdle in your veins? Do not cold chills run over you? Does not your soul shudder when you read of the abominable selfishness of those who hold up false lights to mariners at sea, destroying so many lives, and so much property, for the sake of gratifying their odious selfishness? But professors of religion, you are the light of the world. Do you hold up a false light in the midst of the world's darkness? And when thousands of sinners are hovering round about upon your coast, benighted and bestormed, and looking to you for light, are you engaged in your selfish projects, exhibiting a carnal, earthly, and devilish spirit, while they are running upon the rocks and quicksands, ruining their souls, and going to hell by scores around you? Hear the wail of that lost soul, as it dashes upon the rocks, and sinks to hell. It lifts its eyes and cries out, O, I did not dream that evil was near. I had my eye upon that professor of religion. I transacted business upon the same principles, upon which I saw he transacted his. I kept my eye upon him and steered my bark by his light. And oh, unutterable horror, I am in the depths of an eternal hell!

## **Communion with God- No.'s 1 & 2**

Lectures XVII & XVIII

August 26, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

LECTURE XVII.



Text.--2 Cor. 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

In discussing this subject, I shall--

- I. Consider the meaning of the term communion.*
- II. What is implied in communion with the Holy Ghost.*
- III. How we may know whether and when we have communion with God.*
- IV. The value and importance of communion with God.*
- V. How to secure and perpetuate it.*

### **I. Meaning of the term Communion as used in the Bible.**

It sometimes means friendly intercourse, as in Gen. 18:33: "And the Lord went his way, as soon as He had left COMMUNING with Abraham." Sometimes it means counsel, advice, and instruction; 1 Kings 10:2: "She came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold and precious stones; and when she was come to Solomon, she COMMUNED with him of all that was in her heart." It is the same term in the original that is rendered fellowship in Phil. 2:1: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any FELLOWSHIP of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies." And 1 John 1:3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may also have FELLOWSHIP with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." To commune with God, then, is to have fellowship with Him, friendly intercourse, consultation, advice, instruction.

### **II. What is implied in communion with the Holy Ghost.**

- 1. It implies that He is a moral agent, and not a moral attribute of God.
- 2. His actual and personal presence, and indwelling, in the heart, of him with whom He communes. He must be actually present with our spirits, to render it possible to commune with Him.
- 3. The communion kept up between the Holy Spirit and all his saints in every part of the world, implies both the omnipresence and the omniscience of the Holy Spirit.
- 4. It implies infinite love and condescension in Him. What infinite condescension in God, to suffer such worms as we are, to consult and commune with Him, to hold frequent and protracted private interviews with Him, and to commune with Him of all that is in our hearts. His, surely, is condescension infinitely great.
- 5. Communion with the Holy Spirit implies a disposition in us to consult Him, and commune

with Him, in respect to our duty, his will, and the affairs of his kingdom.

- 6. It implies a disposition in Him to be consulted by us. It implies a constant readiness on his part, to admit us into his presence, to give us audience, and to listen attentively to all that we have to say, and to encourage us to lay open our whole case before Him.
- 7. It implies a sense of our own ignorance and deep dependence upon Him. We never seek communion with God, only in proportion as we are emptied of dependence upon ourselves. A man who is not deeply sensible of his own ignorance will not seek communion with God, for the purpose of receiving instruction of Him. A man who is not emptied of self-dependence, will not seek to lay himself all along in the arms of the Savior.
- 8. It implies that He takes the deepest interest in us. Surely his interest in us must be exceedingly great, to be willing to hold consultation with us so often, to commune with us so deeply, to enter so much into the detail of all our affairs, and interest Himself in our slightest grievances, trials, and difficulties. To do this constantly, without weariness or impatience, certainly implies, on his part, a most profound interest in us.
- 9. It implies a deep sympathy and fellowship between the Holy Ghost and us; that we feel as he does, and that He feels as we do; that we have a common object in view; that we are influenced by the same motives, interested in the same objects, employed in the same labors, and, in short, it implies that our fellowship and sympathy with Him are equal to our communion, for they are in fact the same thing.

### **III. How we may know whether and when we have communion with God.**

- 1. When we are conscious of being drawn by his silent but powerful influence, very near to Him in prayer. Every true Christian knows what it is to feel a secret moving of heart toward God; a silent, but deep, powerful melting, drawing of soul away from the world, from society, from business, from every thing else, into a most sacred private interview with God.

In such cases the soul seeks to be alone with God. It naturally follows, crying after God, and its desires are like a liquid stream, flowing and flowing; and as he is on his way to some retired spot, or upon his knees in his closet, or perhaps in the night season upon his bed, "his heart and his flesh cry out for God, for the living God." From the deep bottom of his heart, his soul cries out, "Father, Father," and repeats and echoes, over and over, all the dear names, the titles, and relations of God; and his soul seems to be all liquid, and flowing, and gushing, and drawn into the deep waters of his love.

- 2. We have communion with God, when we have great freedom and enlargement in prayer. Sometimes the soul feels unutterably burdened with conviction and distress, but has no words. It is bowed down to the earth, but cannot express, nor even think over, in any order, its sins, its burdens, or its sorrows. It seem to be shut up to God, and yet feels as if it could not approach and fully lay the heart open before Him; but at other times, there is great freedom and enlargement of mind. Our thoughts and words flow like a river. We find not only our desires enlarged, but our views of ourselves and of Him greatly enlarged. We have a kind of

supernatural ability, to express ourselves in a most emphatic and elevated manner, in pleading our cause before Him. There seems to be room enough in the benevolent yearnings of our hearts to embrace the world, and the universe; and we seem as it were to embosom the whole race, and bring them before God, in earnest longings, with strong cryings and tears, that He would have mercy on them. We seem to see every thing and feel every thing, and express every thing, on an enlarged scale. We enter into such a deep sympathy with God, as to feel our whole souls drawn away with benevolent desires. In this state of mind we may rest assured we are in communion with God.

- 3. We have communion with God when our necessities are laid open to us. Sometimes we are hard and dark. We know that something must be wrong, but have no clear idea of what it is. I speak now of the case of those who have not yet learned to abide all the while in the light. But those who have made the greatest attainments, of any persons in this world, no doubt, often feel their spiritual necessities laid open before them, in a most remarkable manner. If not conscious of present or recent sin; yet they are often made to see how vastly they fall short of what they should have been had they never sinned at all. How much ignorance, how much weakness, how many infirmities, are open and about them, in consequence of their former sins, and habits of selfishness. God often draws us into deep communion with Him, and has protracted and close interview with us, sometimes for hours and even days together, for the purpose of kindly calling our attention to, and laying open before us, those particulars in our character and infirmities in which we need greater measures of his grace. He makes us to see the depth of our ignorance, how weak we are under temptation, and how certainly we shall be overcome, but for his ever present grace. In this state of mind, we may be sure that we are in communion with God.
- 4. When we are able to spread our whole case, and open up the deepest necessities and secrets of our hearts before God, we are in communion with Him. We sometimes feel as if we could go to the very bottom of our whole being, and bring forth every secret thought, affection, emotion, and whatever has been deep and concealed, and spread them out in the light of his countenance.
- 5. When we are enabled to bring forth our strong reasons in pleading with God, we are in a state of communion with Him. Sometimes we find ourselves able to plead and reason with God, as a man would plead with his friend, to bring forth our reasons, and array our arguments, with a strong confidence and almost assurance, that they will affect his mind as they do our own. The reasons which we offer to God, appear to be weighty, and sufficient to our own minds; and we feel a kind of supernatural confidence, that they will, and must, and do influence the mind of God. We press Him with them. We turn them over and over; lay them out in their connections and bearings, and feel as if they could not be resisted. Nay, we insist upon their weight and force, and often urge them upon God, with a kind of supernatural vehemency of spirit, which refuses to be denied. This was no doubt the state of Jacob's mind, when he wrestled all night with God. This state of mind is what is intended by wrestling with God. In this state the soul uses the strongest language, feels the utmost confidence in the ground it takes, takes hold of the very strength of God, and casts its whole being upon Him, and upon the strong reasons which it urges, and upon his immutable faithfulness and promises. But this state of mind is only understood by those who have experienced it. The stranger intermeddleth not with such things as these. And could any cold hearted professor or ungodly sinner be concealed in some secret

place, and witness the secret intercourse of such a soul in communion with God; could he listen to his language, behold his streaming perspiration, the whole scene would, no doubt, impress him with mingled feelings of wonder and consternation.

- 6. When we feel like consulting God on almost every thing that interests us, and that concerns the interests of his kingdom, we are in communion with Him. Christians sometimes feel, and many habitually feel a disposition to ask God's opinion, consent, and advice, at every turn. They seem to abide in that state of mind in which Paul was, when he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" With others, less advanced in grace, this feeling is not so habitual; but yet all true Christians know what it is to feel their hearts drawn into an attitude of constant consultation with God, a fleeing and running to Him for advice, a breathing out its ejaculations to Him for counsel; a disposition to consult Him about the minutest things, and mention to Him even the most trivial occurrences and circumstances of life. In this state, the soul feels like a very little child, consulting a most wise and affectionate father.
- 7. Whenever we feel disposed to make God a sacred confidant, and disclose to Him all those secret things which we would confide to no other being in the universe, we are in a state of communion. The Christian's soul is sometimes drawn into such a state as to feel an intense longing to treat God as the most sacred and confidential friend, laying open before Him all those secret things with which no other being has any right to intermeddle. The Christian's soul is united to God, and sustains a thousand endearing and interesting relations to Him, that it sustains to no other being. It is sometimes compared to the married state; but it almost infinitely exceeds it in the deep and sacred confidence it reposes in God. No conjugal confidence ever began to equal it. The sweet, sacred, deep, profound confidence of the soul in God. No husband ever laid open to his wife, or wife to the husband, the deep springs of action, the most retired and secret workings of the soul, as one in communion with God will often do. O the unspeakable confidence which the soul feels, when it discloses to Him the deepest, darkest, profoundest necessities of the whole being.
- 8. When the scriptures are opened to our understandings, and made to take hold upon our hearts, we are in communion with God. A soul not in communion with God, may be interested in the Bible as a history; but its more spiritual parts are like a sealed or an uninteresting book. The mind's eye will wander over chapter after chapter, wander through its sacred pages, and amidst all the glories it reveals, without being struck, and fixed, and held as by enchantment, in view of its glorious developments. But when in communion with God, every sentence bears the impress of God. It is full of meaning, full of light, and love. It discloses the very secrets of the heart of God, and lays his very being bare to our inspection. The soul pauses at every sentence, and wonders, and admires, and adores. It looks into the deep profound. The spiritual world is open to its view. It seems, as with a telescope, to have bidden eternity into his presence. And the whole spiritual world seems to be so uncovered before him, that he is almost in the state in which Paul was, not able to tell whether he is in the body or out of the body. It is easy for a mind in this state to conceive what Paul meant, when he said, "I knew a man fourteen years ago, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth; I knew such a one caught up into the third heavens, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The fact is, his mind was so entirely absorbed with the objects presented to his

spiritual eye--his attention was so entirely engrossed with them, as to be unconscious of the presence of any objects of sense. And he could not afterwards tell, whether he was in the body or out of the body. It is related of Xavier, that his communion with God was so intense, that when he retired for secret devotion, he was obliged to leave word with his servant to call him off at a certain hour. Sometimes his servant would go, after he had remained for hours in secret communion with God, and find him upon his knees, the Bible open before him, with his eyes fixed, and lost in deep, secret communion with God, so that his servant would be obliged to shake him, before his attention could be so drawn off from spiritual objects, as to be conscious that he was still a resident of earth. I have myself known instances, in which persons were very much in this state of mind.

Now there are many degrees of this kind of communion with God, when the scriptures are so opened up to the mind, and so understood, and its truths so apprehended, and appear to the soul so glorious and ravishing, as to swallow up in a greater or less degree, the thoughts, attention, and whole being.

- 9. When we are made deeply sensible of our character, past and present, we are in communion with God. Sometimes Christ has intercourse with the soul, and calls its attention to a great many things, that make it vastly ashamed of itself. The whole soul is filled with shame, confusion and blushing. The Holy Spirit gently but thoroughly opens up to the mind, the past, and the present, and lifts up the vail of oblivion, quickens the memory, and as it were causes our whole character to stand out before our mind's eye, like a hideous and unseemly ghost. The soul in this state seeks to find the very lowest place in the whole universe. it cries out, from its deepest foundations, "O to get infinitely low before God." Sometimes persons in this state of shame, self-abasement, and unutterably self-abhorrence, seem not at all to be aware, that this is communion with God. Being in the habit of considering communion with God to consist altogether in those joys which the saints sometimes experience, they do not realize that these deeply self-abasing thoughts and views, are only the result of a close and searching interview with God. In this state of mind, they sometimes feel as if God has forsaken them, and can see it to be so infinitely reasonable, that He should, as not to be aware that they are now, perhaps, more thoroughly in the light, and really in a state of more deep and thorough communion with God than perhaps they have been at any other time.
- 10. We are in communion with God, when we have great confidence in Christ. The mind is sometimes filled with adoring views of the fulness there is in Christ, as its Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. It oftentimes, when drawn into this form of communion with the Holy Spirit, whose business it is to take the things of Christ and show them to us, sees in Him such infinite fulness and security, such a world of promises, so vast in their meaning, so true, so infinitely certain is their fulfillment, that they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. The soul feels at such times that it is indeed complete in Him; that He is a perfect Righteousness, a perfect Sanctification, a perfect Redemption; that his grace and fulness are large enough to swallow up all thought, all finite conception; that the sins of all mankind might be merged in the ocean of his grace; that all the temptations, and wants, and woes of man, might all be swallowed up in the boundless ocean of his love and grace, and would all be only as a pebble in the midst of the great Pacific Ocean. At such times, the mind can see that in Christ dwells the fulness of the Godhead. It feels itself set upon everlasting rock, in a large

place, and its goings established. It feels such vast repose in Christ, that "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord Jesus Christ round about them that fear Him."

- 11. When we are spiritually minded, we are in communion with God. All those states of mind of which I have spoken, are forms of spiritual mindedness; but here I mean a state of spiritual mindedness in general, upon every subject; a habitual minding of spiritual things, in opposition to minding earthly things. In this state, a man, while he lives in the flesh, is, after all, much more conversant with the spiritual and heavenly world, than with the men and things of this world. He indeed walks upon the earth; but his conversation is in heaven. He is surrounded with sensible objects; but he is so little interested in them, that he scarcely heeds them. His soul has come into the light, as God is in the light. It walks, it lives in light. It is bathed in the very sunlight of heaven. Spiritual objects are stronger and more impressive realities than sensible objects. Such a soul, and such a one only, can understand the full import of Paul's language, when he said: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The soul in this state, is in a marvelous attitude. In the body, and of course able to converse with sensible objects, and yet, so in the Spirit as to be able to hold sweet, intimate, and continual communion with the Holy Spirit. It can repose its head as upon the very bosom of Christ, while its feet are standing upon the earth.
- 12. When we have victory over our spiritual enemies, we have communion with the Holy Spirit. The soul in communion with God can easily bid Satan to depart, and he flees. Its faith seems to have the strength of omnipotence. It seems to vanquish all its spiritual foes with the utmost ease. The mind in this state rises above spiritual enemies and the power of temptation. The waves of temptation, that would at another time overwhelm it, seem, when in communion with God, to break harmless at its feet. It stands upon a rock above them. Temptation cannot reach it, but spends its impotent strength in beating against the everlasting rock on which it stands. It feels that Christ fights all its battles for it. It has only to hide in Him, as in the cleft of a great rock, and Christ says to the winds and waves of temptation, "Peace, be still," and "there is a great calm." Now, beloved, do you know any thing about these states of mind. If you do you know what it is to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the Holy Ghost.
- 13. There is one more form of communion which I will mention, and that is, when the soul is swallowed up, and all its will and desire lost and merged in the will of God. In this state of mind, the soul feels as if it had not and could not have any will of its own, any wish or desire, that any thing in the universe should be in any respect different from what God would have it. It feels that it has and can have no interest of its own, aside from the interest and will of God. His interest, his kingdom, and his will are its all. If in any case it is uncertain what is the will of God, it feels as if it could make no other petition, in respect to that event, than "Thy will be done." It feels such an attachment to the will of God, such confidence in it, as infinitely right and benevolent, as to feel as if it never could have a wish, desire, or thought, inconsistent with the will of God, and to feel as if the least risings of opposition against the will of God--the least want of most entire resignation, and most entire acquiescence in his will--were more to be dreaded and more terrible than hell itself.

I must omit the remaining heads of this discourse till my next.

## LECTURE XVIII.

September 9, 1839

### COMMUNION WITH GOD--No. 2

Text.--2 Cor. 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

In pursuing this subject, I shall notice, according to my plan--

#### IV. The value and importance of Communion with God.

- 1. Communion with God is just as important as the true knowledge of God. No man really and truly knows any thing of God, only as God reveals Himself personally to that soul. I do not mean, that He must make to him a revelation not made in the Bible; but God must make him feel and apprehend the real meaning of the Bible. "No man can say that Jesus is the Christ, save by the Holy Ghost." No man understands any thing more than the letter of the Bible, only as he has direct and personal communion with God. The Bible is to no man a revelation any further than God makes it a revelation to him. Without this personal and direct opening up the truths of the Bible to the soul, it is only "the letter that killeth." Bible truth is to him no revelation of God. It is but blindness, darkness, and mystery. This does not seem to be understood, even by the great body of the Church--that direct communion with God, the Holy Spirit explaining his own word, and making the Bible a direct and personal revelation to him. I say, it does not seem as if the Church understood that without this, no soul has the knowledge of the true God. Why it is said, that "to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life." But do all know God and Jesus Christ, who have the Bible? Do all who read and even study the Bible know Jesus Christ, and have they eternal life? Surely not. None know God and Christ in such a sense as to have eternal life, unless He is directly and personally revealed to them, through the word, by the Holy Spirit. What vast and ruinous mistakes are in the Church upon this subject.
- 2. Communion with God is just as important as true knowledge of ourselves. No man has any thorough knowledge of himself any farther than he has been revealed to himself, by his intercourse with God. The human heart is naturally such a deep pit of darkness, that we absolutely need a revelation of ourselves as much as we need a revelation of God. God is the only being in the universe that knows us. We are naturally lost, bewildered, and in almost total ignorance of our own real characters. In our long and frequent intercourse and communion with God, He takes occasion, as it were, in our protracted conversations with Him, to spread out before us our own history, to reveal us to ourselves, to command up from the deep oblivion of our own forgetfulness, the forgotten occurrences of our lives. In his light and in the light of his law alone, do we ever come to a right knowledge of ourselves. O how infinitely important is that communion with God, that reveals man to himself.

- 3. Communion with God is just as important as that we should be saved. No man can by any possibility be saved, without that communion with God of which I have been speaking. He cannot be saved without this communion, for the simple reason, that he cannot be saved without the knowledge of God and of himself. It is absolutely indispensable to his being sanctified and prepared for heaven.
- 4. Communion with God is just as important as that we should be useful to others. Here is the great secret of the inefficiency of the Christian minister--their want of that deep communion with God--that walking in the light of God--that sympathy and fellowship with God--that intercourse and fellowship with the spiritual world--that gives unction, and spirituality, and power to their preaching.

O what is a minister that does not keep up communion with God? As well might an alien, an enemy, or a rebel, be employed as an ambassador, as a minister assume that office, and attempt to treat with sinners in the name of God, without communion with Him. My ministerial brethren, will you allow me to ask you, in the kindness, sincerity and sobriety of my soul, whether you understand, in your own experience, what I have been talking about? Do you know, dearly beloved, in your own experiences, what this communion with God is? Do you live in his light? Do you walk with God? Is your conversation in heaven? Do you feel as if your souls were wafted on the Pacific Ocean of love, by the trade winds of his eternal Spirit? Do your people, when you go into the pulpit, see that your soul stands out before them as bathed in the sun light of heaven? Do your prayers, and preaching, and all your ways, impress them with the conviction, that you are a spiritually minded man--that you are risen with Christ--that your conversation is in heaven--that your heart is not set upon things on earth, but upon those things where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God?

My brother, my beloved brother, do you preach the spirit or the letter of the gospel? Are you a minister of the New or of the Old Testament? Be not offended, but let me come near, I pray you, and commune with you. Would you be useful to your fellow-men? Would you glorify God in all your ways? Are you useful to them? Does your fruit abound to the glory of God? Are you instrumental in watering their souls with the water of eternal life? Do you feed them with the bread of heaven? What is the state of the church to which you minister? What is the standard of their spirituality? Especially, how is it with those with whom you associate most, and over whom you have the most influence? Do you feed them with the "sincere milk of the word?"

If, by your daily experience, you know what that communion with God is, of which I have been speaking, I might venture to answer these questions for you; but if you do not, you are but a "blind leader of the blind." Be not displeased with this. I speak it in love, and because I deeply feel it. And if you do not know it to be true, the more deeply do I pity you, and the church to which you minister; and the more emphatically do I blame you.

- 5. Communion with God is as important, as it is that we should not ruin the souls of those



around us. A professor of religion who has not habitual communion with God, is one of the greatest curses to the world that is in the world. He is a professor of religion, and hence the eyes of the world and of the Church are upon him. And by his profession he is publicly set forth as an example and a light to the world. He is professedly the representative of Christ. he is to be regarded as a living illustration of the truth, nature, and importance of religion. He is a "living epistle, known and read of all men." But if he has not communion with God, there is nothing in him that resembles God. Without communion with God, he is earthly, sensual, devilish; the very reverse of what he professes to be; and with his profession of religion and the spirit of the world, he is certainly one of the greatest stumbling blocks and greatest curses that can stumble and afflict the world. If this is true of any professor of religion, what must be true of a minister of Christ who does not hold habitual communion with God. I do not hesitate to say, that he is vastly worse than no minister at all; that the people had almost infinitely better be without any pastor, than to have one who has turned his back upon God, and holds little or no communion with Him from day to day. The fact is, that communion with God is the secret of all piety. It is absolutely indispensable to the usefulness of ministers and private Christians, and that without which they will certainly do almost infinitely more hurt than good in the world.

- 6. Communion with God is as important as that we should not be a perpetual dishonor to God. No man can honor God in his walk and conversation, without keeping up habitual communion with God. Nay, his life will be a perfect libel upon the character of God--a perfect misrepresentation of God and of his religion--just that which, of all things, is best calculated to increase and perpetuate the prejudices of the world against God.
- 7. Communion with God is just as important as that we should have peace of mind. Nothing so recommends the gospel to mankind, as the exhibition of that great peace of mind which they have who love the law of God. To our own happiness, to our own usefulness, to the honor of God, to the interests of the church and the world around us, our own peace of mind is of vast importance--that we should be able to pass through the storms and trials that keep the world and the great mass of the Church in a state of great fermentation and distress, in calmness and unbroken peace, is a most desirable and infinitely important thing. But this cannot be without communion with God. When storms arise, the soul must be in such a state as to take refuge in the very bosom of God; whence it can look out upon the warring elements, with the keenest composure of mind. God's heart is always calm. It is a great and infinite ocean of eternal love and peace. Infinitely serene, and calm, and pure; never disturbed by any event, nor thrown into a state of fermentation, by any or by all the occurrences of the universe.

Now nothing can calm our own minds, amidst the shocks, vicissitudes, and trials of life, but continual communion with the infinitely calm and peaceful mind of God. O when the soul has been disquieted by the occurrences of life, and takes a deep plunge into the ocean of eternal love--when it steals away from all human eyes, and holds a protracted and soul calming interview with God, how peacefully does it look about upon those occurrences that are throwing the world into fermentation around it.

- 8. Communion with God is just as important as we should have any grace or religion at all. No man, be his pretensions or professions what they may, has one particle of religion in exercise, any farther than he lives in communion with God. Christ says, "I am the vine, and ye are the

branches." Now communion with God is just as indispensable to the life of religion in the soul, as the sap of the vine is to the life of the branches.

#### **V. How to secure and perpetuate Communion with God.**

- 1. It must be sought. God will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do those things for them which they need. The soul must desire communion with God. It must seek it. It must prize it above all price.
- 2. If you desire communion with God, do not neglect Him, and go into communion with other gods. Suffer no idol to have any place in your heart. Suffer nothing, of any name or nature, to draw off your heart from communion with Him. See that your heart does not, in the least degree, become divided between God and some other object of affection.
- 3. Be sure not to neglect his counsels, when He condescends to commune with you and give you advice. Whatever he shows to be your duty, do it at all hazards. Do not in any case, or for any consideration, confer with flesh and blood. Spare not a right hand, or a right eye; but whenever He shows you the path of duty, let it be the fixed purpose of your heart to enter upon it at once, without gainsaying or hesitation, if you face death at every step.
- 4. Avoid every thing which you would avoid, were He visibly present with you. Consider how you would act, and what you would do, if Christ stood visibly before, or were God to be seen by you, pouring the blaze of his searching eye upon all your ways. Now be sure, if you mean to keep up communion with God, to be as holy in heart and life, and conversation, as you would be were Christ your visible and constant companion.
- 5. Engage in nothing that shall in any way interrupt your communion with Him. Engage in no more business than is consistent with living and walking with God. Engage in no such kinds of business, adopt no such business principles, read no such books, have no such companions, spend no time in such a way as is inconsistent with a state of entire consecration to God.
- 6. Keep your whole heart open to Him. Let the door of your heart, as it were, stand open, and your heart lie all spread out continually before God. Habitually and daily lay open the secrets of your whole heart before Him. Cultivate this state of mind, and rest not short of feeling that you keep your whole mind in a state of entire transparency, before God, with nothing covered up. or in the least degree veiled or concealed from the inspection of his eye. I do not speak thus because I suppose any thing can be concealed from God; but because it is one thing for God to see through your whole being, whether you will or not, and quite another for you to come, and habitually, and voluntarily show Him your whole heart.
- 7. Give yourself wholly up to his guidance. Let it be the fixed purpose of your heart to spare no idol, to indulge no sin, to do nothing, say nothing, think nothing, be nothing, more nor less, than is in exact accordance with his guidance and instruction. Have no more desire or thought of varying a hair's breadth from his instruction, than you would of cutting your own throat, or even of leaping into hell.

- 8. Rest not, if your communion with God is interrupted but for one hour. Let the medium between your heart and God be so clear, that the least mist or thickness of atmosphere shall at once alarm your soul. Whatever you are engaged in, wherever you are, let your very first business be to inquire what it is that is causing the Sun of Righteousness to shine more dimly upon your soul. And be not satisfied until you ascertain and remove the cause. Nay, you must set your heart upon keeping in the pathway of the just, that shineth more and more until the perfect day. Better, vastly better for you, to sacrifice any worldly good, and make any earthly sacrifice, than to have your intercourse with God at all interrupted. It is better far to live in a dungeon, in communion with God, than to sit upon a throne in an earthly mind.
- 9. Expect much, and adequate guidance and grace. Christ says, his "grace is sufficient for thee." It is was sufficient for Paul, under the circumstances in which he was, it is sufficient for every saint. Do not be afraid then to ask and expect great things. The greater things the better. "Open your mouth wide," He says, "and I will fill it. Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." And remember that He is able to do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." He has told you, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." If, therefore, you limit his giving by your unbelief, you grieve his heart. You cannot do Him a greater injury than by your unbelief, to prevent his bestowing upon you the blessing he so greatly desires to give.
- 10. Show Him that nothing is valued by you in comparison with communion, with Him,--your lusts, and whatever would in the least degree divert you from Himself. Do not surround yourself with idols, nor with such creature comforts as will show Him that you feel as if He were not a sufficient portion. He calls you his bride. Let your soul be satisfied with his love and wander not at all after other loves. Let Him see that you consider Him an all-sufficient and infinitely satisfying portion, and that you desire no other.
- 11. Form no unnecessary attachments to any being or thing on earth. Guard your heart as you would guard the apple of your eye. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." And remember that the Lord your God is a jealous God; you cannot have communion with Him and communion with the world at the same time.
- 12. Aim just as much at being wholly consecrated to Him as you aim at being religious at all. Have no thought, and make no calculation at all inconsistent with this. Form no plans, entertain no desires, and engage in nothing whatever, that shall be in the least degree inconsistent with your being as holy as He is holy.
- 13. Be sure, as far as possible, to avoid temptation. It would seem as if the great mass of professors of religion are either perfectly blind in regard to exposing themselves to temptation, or the they think themselves able to overcome in their own strength. I have often been struck and shocked with the state of mind in which those persons are who deny the doctrine of entire sanctification or entire consecration to God in this life. It is manifest that they expect to continue to sin, as much as they expect to live; that they make all their calculations accordingly; that they do not so much as mean to live in a state of entire consecration to God. No, not for a single day.

A brother minister said, but a short time since, in my hearing, that on being requested, some time since, by a brother minister to engage in a certain business which he feared would be a great temptation to him, he declined, upon the ground that he feared, that in so doing he should sin. His brother replied, "O what of that? we are sinning all the time. If we sin we must repent, you know."

Now I cannot tell in how many instances I have seen this state of mind developed, among professors of religion, within a few years past. And it sets in a most striking and abhorrent light, the sentiment that Christians are not to expect to be entirely sanctified until death.

Now, Christian, let me tell you, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, what, if you are a Christian, you know to be true--that you cannot live in communion with God, only as you give yourself up to Him, in a state of entire consecration. Whenever you are overcome by sin, your communion is interrupted of course; and unless you really mean, intend, and expect to be wholly and perpetually consecrated to his service, to keep up communion with God is impossible.

- 14. Communion with God cannot be perpetuated, without watching unto prayer, and praying in the Holy Ghost. "Pray without ceasing, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." It is a vain dream, to expect to keep up communion with God in the neglect of frequent and protracted seasons of secret prayer. When a certain man, not long since, was asked, whether he prayed in secret, he replied, "When my friends are absent I write to them, but when they are with me I have no need to write." But I would ask such a one, when your friends are with you, do you not so much as speak to them? Communion with God, implies what is equivalent to talking with God. And more than this is implied in communion with God. It implies the most intimate and confidential interchange of views and feelings that can be conceived. Let no man dream that his communion with God will continue for any length of time, if he neglect to offer much, very much secret prayer.

## REMARKS.

1. How few there be that keep up communion with God.
2. Sinning willfully against the light may cut off communion between your soul and God forever. I have known some lamentable and distressing cases, where persons by one willful sin, brought themselves into a state of protracted, if not final despair.
3. Communion with God is the secret of all ministerial usefulness. Here let me say that ministers often deceive themselves, as it respects their usefulness, through the instrumentality of pious members of their church, there may be revivals of religion in their churches, entirely independent of their instrumentality. This, I have good reason to know, is often the case. And that they are often supposed by others to be eminently useful in promoting the salvation of souls, when, as a matter of fact, they are right in the way. It is to be feared that they often think themselves in a good degree useful, because they live so far from God as not to see that they are in reality doing more hurt than good.

4. In the light of this subject, we can also see the fruit of ministerial unfruitfulness. Christ says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." In this passage Christ seems expressly to teach, that if ministers are unfruitful, or if any Christian is unfruitful, it is because, as a matter of fact, he does not abide in Christ. Abiding in Christ I understand, to be the keeping up constant communion with Him. Now as these words of Christ are true, no professor of religion, and no minister, has a right to say that he abides in Christ, if he does not "bring forth much fruit."

5. From this subject we see the importance of students keeping up communion with God during the progress of their education. It is, I believe, one of the greatest, one of the most common, and ruinous errors among students to suppose that they can give up in a great measure communion with God while pursuing their college education, and that they shall naturally resume it again when they shall enter upon Theology, or at all events when they shall enter the ministry. Now, beloved young men, let me warn you against this delusion, as fatal to your future usefulness. Inquire the world around among all the fruitless ministers of your acquaintance, and you will find almost without exception that this has been the "stone of stumbling" to them. They were pressed in their studies. They gave up communion with God for communion with their authors, their teachers, and their fellow students. They became earthly, sensual, devilish. And the results of their ministry, can tell you the consequences of their folly.

6. The privileges of Christians now are greater than if they enjoyed the personal presence and preaching of Christ. Christian, what would you say, if you could have Christ for your pastor. Should you not expect to grow in grace? Would you not expect to live a life of entire consecration to God? Here what He say, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you." "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; and He shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, that He shall take of mine and shew it unto you." Here then we have the express mind of Christ, that the presence of the Holy Spirit which we may always enjoy, is of more importance to us than his personal teachings. Christ could not be every where in his bodily presence. But the Holy Ghost is every where. Christ could only instruct us by his words and example were He personally present with us. But his Spirit can directly approach our minds and put us in possession at once of the whole truth. Christian brother, sister, ministerial brethren, I beseech you, understand your privilege and know that as a matter of fact, they are greater, if you will lay hold of them, than if you lived in the same house, eat at the same table, enjoyed the daily conversation, and personal preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

O, then keep up constant communion with God. And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all, Amen.

## **Temptations Must Be Put Away**

Lecture XIX

October 7, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Matt. 5:29,30: "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

In discussing this subject I will show:

*I. That things in themselves lawful and even important, may, by sinful indulgences, become a cause and a source of stumbling to the soul.*

*II. That however dear, and even important they may be, if through abuse, they, as a matter of fact, are the cause of our falling into bondage to sin, they must be put away.*

*III. That to continue the temptation, in such cases, and expect grace to overcome it, is to tempt God.*

*IV. If any form of temptation is allowed to have dominion over us, we are inevitably and for ever lost.*

### **I. Things in themselves lawful and even important, may, by sinful indulgence, become a cause and a source of stumbling to the soul.**

- 1. This is plainly implied in the text. The text plainly lays down a principle, and a strong case is supposed by way of illustration. If thy right hand or thy right eye offend thee; that is--cause thee to offend--cut off the hand and pluck out the eye. What is more important to us than a right hand or right eye? It is as if the Savior had said, If these things, which are the most important to you, as a matter of fact, become a snare and lead you into sin, put them away. Here it is as plainly implied as possible, that the most lawful and useful things, may become a snare to our souls.
- 2. It is a very common occurrence. Who does not know, that his eyes, and his ears, his friends, his employments, his possessions, his bodily appetites, and multitudes of useful things, may, by

perversion, be made a snare to the soul.

**II. However dear and even important they may be, if, through abuse, they, as a matter of fact, are the cause of our falling into bondage to sin, they must be put away.**

- 1. Because, as the text affirms, it is profitable for us; that is--our own good demands it. "For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."
- 2. It must be put away, because whatever is prized more than sin is hated, is our idol and our god. That is our god which we supremely regard. If we supremely love Jehovah, we shall sooner part with any thing than offend Him. Hence Christ teaches that, except a man hate his father, and mother, and brother, and sister, and even his own life, for Christ's sake, he cannot be his disciple. If any thing is loved or prized in comparison with God, we have no religion at all. If a man, therefore, does not dread sin more than he dreads death, he is no disciple of Christ. If there is any thing in the world that he loves more than he hates sin, any thing whatever, that would be spared, notwithstanding it kept him in bondage to sin, he is not, and cannot be a disciple of Christ. I speak of course of those things that can be put away by us, by an act of self-denial on our part. And if there is any kind or degree of self-denial which we would not prefer to being in sin, then, if the Bible is true, we are not the disciples of Christ. Let it be understood, now, that I do not speak of some very rare and high attainments in piety; but of a universal condition of discipleship. Christ has laid it down in as strong language as any in which it can be expressed. He uses the strongest language, without seeming to fear being misunderstood. He says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

**III. To continue the temptation in such case, and expect grace to overcome it, is to tempt God.**

- 1. Because Christ has taught us to pray, that we may not be tempted. Now what is tempting god, if this is not--to pray that we may not be tempted, without using all the means in our power to avoid temptation? Suppose, that a drunkard should pray against temptations to intemperance, and still keep his sideboard loaded down with all kinds of tempting liquors? I know it is sometimes related of persons, that they have set some tempting object continually before them, to show the strength of their resolution to overcome. Whether there is any truth in such reported cases I know not; but this I know, that it is very unwise. And, if persons are instructed, it is nothing less than tempting god, to suffer a temptation, that can be removed at our pleasure, and that actually brings us into sin, to continue before us and exert its influence upon us.
- 2. It is tempting God, because grace was never designed to purchase exemption from self-sacrifice, and self-denial; but to lead to them and support the soul under them.
- 3. To suffer the temptation in such cases to continue is to tempt God; because grace was never designed to purchase exemption from cross-bearing, cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes, and putting away our idols, and those indulgences that overcome us. But grace was designed to enable us to empty ourselves of all those things.

- 4. It is enough for the servant to be as his master. Christ, as a man, was obliged to watch and deny Himself, and keep Himself clear of those besetments and temptations that would naturally overcome Him. His Apostles followed in his steps. Paul found it indispensable to keep his body under, to mortify his members which were upon the earth; and it is an unalterable law of the kingdom of grace, that men must put away those weights and easily besetting sins that hinder and overcome them, or they will never enter into the kingdom of God. Therefore, to continue the temptation and expect grace to overcome it, is to "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness."

#### **IV. If any form of temptation is allowed to have dominion over us, we are inevitably and for ever lost.**

- 1. Because it is a state of impenitence. He is an impenitent sinner, who prefers living in sin, to cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye.
- 2. To suffer a temptation that prevails over us to continue, when by an act of self-denial on our part we can put it away, is but to confirm a state of impenitence. Every day and hour we suffer ourselves to continue under such an influence, the bonds of impenitence are strengthening, until we are hopelessly delivered up to the dominion of our besetting sins.
- 3. To suffer any form of temptation to continue, which as a matter of fact leads us into sin--which temptation can be put away by us--is totally inconsistent with any degree of holiness. Suffering the temptation under such circumstances is an impenitent state of mind. It is the opposite of all holiness. It so supremely loves the darling object as to refuse to part with it, although as a matter of fact it leads us to sin against God! I say again, that this is not merely a state of defective piety; it must be a state of no piety at all.

#### **REMARKS.**

1. If things the most lawful and important in themselves must, if through abuse they have become a stumbling-block to us, be put away, how much more needful then that we put away useless and unnecessary things.

2. From this subject we can see the error of those who hold on to practices and things, that are a cause of stumbling to them, on the ground that they are lawful in themselves. What is more lawful or more important than a right hand or a right eye? Suppose, that when Christ delivered this sermon on the mount, of which the text is a part, one of his hearers had replied-- "Surely, this man is mad and hath a devil. Will he teach us to cut off our right hands and pluck out our right eyes? Did not God make them for lawful and useful purposes? Would he have a man maim himself, or make himself a cripple for life? Is it not lawful for us to enjoy the good things of providence? This is altogether a legal spirit, and by no means the doctrine from God." What reply, suppose you, Christ would have made to such an objection as this? And yet how many vehement debates do we hear, in which men are pleading for and defending their lusts, indulging their appetites, and ruining their souls, on the ground that these things are lawful in themselves? Suppose they are lawful in themselves, and yet, as a matter of fact, you abuse them and suffer them to lead you into sin. If they are lawful in themselves, you do not use them lawfully. They have become your masters, instead of your servants; and therefore you must put



them away, however lawful they may be in themselves, or you will lose your souls.

3. We see the mistake and the presumption of those who hold on to things which prove a snare to them, on the ground that they are useful things. What is more useful than a right hand or a right eye? And yet Christ says, put them away; for however useful they may be, they will never pay you for the loss of your souls.

4. We see the folly and madness of those who hold on to their indulgences in things that lead them into sin, on the ground that these things are not expressly forbidden in the word of God. One man can find it no where forbidden in the scriptures to use ardent spirits--another can find no express passage, forbidding the use of wine--and a third can find slavery no where prohibited in the word of God. In short, many seem disposed to indulge themselves in whatever is not expressly forbidden, without at all regarding the actual influence of those things upon them.

5. How little he cares for sin, or knows of God, who can willingly spare that which leads him into sin. What can he know of God? What does he really know of sin? What idea can he have of true religion? Surely none that are not infinitely far from truth.

6. From this subject it is easy to see, that if property becomes a snare it should be put away. If a man's state of mind is such that, as a matter of fact, worldly possessions lead him into a state of worldly-mindedness, he should give his property at once to the cause of God, and refuse to possess any, even if he become as poor as Lazarus. Such a course is altogether indispensable to the salvation of his soul. If his property is a snare, he must put it away, whether it be much or little. Any and every article of property, that gets hold of the heart, diverts the attention and affections from God, whether it be a dollar or a mine of gold, a horse, a house, a farm, a store, or any thing whatever, that as a matter of fact alienates the soul from God, must be put away, or the soul is lost. Now is this any stronger than the doctrine of the text? No, verily. If this is extravagant, then Christ was extravagant. If this is not solemn truth, and if as much as I here affirm is not true, then the text is not true, and Christ is a false witness. I know that such statements are apt to be looked upon as extravagant; but mark what I say--It is no extravagant assertion, that whatever piece of property, whatever kind or amount of worldly goods, seduces the soul away from God, they must be put away, and put away for ever, or the soul is inevitably lost.

7. What vast madness possesses the souls of those who are endeavoring to get all the worldly goods they can, and even to lay up wealth for their children, when they are as conscious as they are of their own existence, that their worldly possessions are diverting their minds from God and heaven. It would seem as if they were enlisted to work out their own damnation with all their might.

8. If you are inclined to eat too much, you must deny yourselves those kinds of diet that betray you into gluttony. Whatever those kinds of diet are, of which you are so fond, and that overcome you when placed before you, and lead you to transgress the laws of your being, put them entirely away. Do not suffer them to find a place upon your table.

9. The exact opposite of this course is generally pursued by mankind. From the general conduct of mankind, it would seem that they fear starvation a thousand times more than they do gluttony, and

that the utmost attention must be paid to preparing tempting dishes, or mankind would not have sufficient appetite to meet the demands of their nature. Now gluttony is one of the most common sins in the world. It is the testimony of the best judges upon this subject, that excessive eating is the most common form of intemperance that prevails among mankind, and is the cause of more disease, especially in this country, than any other form of intemperance. How unwise then, how wicked, what tempting God is it, to continue to prepare and set before yourselves those tempting dishes, instead of furnishing your tables with those wholesome, bland articles of diet of which you will be likely to eat but the requisite quantity.

10. If any article of dress, as a matter of fact, begets pride and vanity, occupies your thoughts, and diverts your mind from God, put it away for ever. A woman in one of our large cities, who was justly considered beautiful, and had been recently converted, was seen by a female friend with her hands filled with artificial flowers and curls, approaching the fire. "What!" answered the young convert, "I am going to burn them up." "O," said the friend, "don't burn them up; you can sell them and give the avails to some benevolent object." "Sell them," said she, "and thus tempt somebody else to be as proud and vain of them as I have been! No! I will burn them up. They shall no more be a temptation and a snare to any human being."

How wonderful is the conduct of human beings, and especially of professors of religion. Knowing, as they do, their weakness and liability to be overcome by pride, one would suppose that they would avoid, in the purchase of articles of dress, every thing that might excite pride or vanity, as they would avoid destruction itself. But alas! how different is their conduct. Under the pretense of consulting good taste, they are at the utmost pains, and spare no expense, in tempting themselves to pride, by the purchase of any and every article that will adorn their persons, and show them off to advantage. Let me say, then, that whatever of dress, or equipage, or furniture, as a matter of fact excites pride and vanity, must be put away, or the soul is lost.

11. Every appetite and passion that has the ascendancy, and leads us into sin, must be crucified and its dominion entirely destroyed, or the soul is utterly lost.

12. Those who live in self-indulgence, and still think that they know and enjoy Christ, are deceived Antinomians. I have heard of some, who professed to come into the liberty of the gospel, decrying every thing that looked like self-denial and mortifying the flesh, as legal and belonging to Judaism, rather than to Christianity. Hence they indulge in the use of wines and strong drinks--their women indulge in dress, and flutter about after the fashions of this world; because, forsooth, they are now in a state of liberty, they spurn and despise a course of temperance, self-denial, and cross-bearing, of non-conformity to the world, as altogether a legal and self-righteous spirit and course of life. So did not Paul. So did not Christ. So does not any one who truly knows Christ.

13. Many seem to understand the gospel as designed to purchase indulgence, instead of begetting self-denial. The gospel was evidently designed to enlighten the minds of men in regard to the value of heavenly things--to bring them out from under the dominion of the objects of sense, and engage their thoughts and their hearts, in the pursuit and enjoyment of spiritual objects; and thus to lead mankind to neglect the glitter and baubles of this world--to forgo pampering their appetites, indulging their passions, adorning their bodies, and floating on in the currents of this world. But many seem so

entirely to mistake the true spirit and intent of the gospel, as to suppose it designed to sanctify conformity to the world, instead of entirely delivering the soul from it. With this understanding of the gospel some persons seem to be in a very wonderful state of mind. I heard, sometime since, of a young woman, a professor of religion, who was in the habit of cohabiting with a young man as if she had been his wife, and who, before retiring to her bed of iniquity and shameless lust, would kneel down, and very gravely thank God, that He allowed her such indulgences.

Now, she no doubt supposed herself to be very thankful, and in a very humble frame of mind. Although this was an extreme case, yet I have myself seen many things that seemed to involve the same principle, and to be the result of the same utter misunderstanding and perversion of the gospel, where persons were manifestly living in self-indulgence, pride, and luxury, and appeared to be very thankful that the gospel had relieved them from the necessity of an opposite course of life, and had sanctioned and sanctified such a use of the good things of providence, as that in which they were indulging--squandering Christ's money, injuring their health, stupefying and imbruting their minds, adorning their bodies, compressing their chest with tight lacing, and in multitudes of ways making war on both moral and physical law; and yet, having the idea that the gospel sanctioned all this, they were highly pleased with such a gospel, and such a Christ, and such a salvation--a salvation evidently not from sin, but in sin; not from the dominion of the flesh, but a salvation that throws up the reins to appetite, lust, and vanity. These poor dreamers seem to suppose that there is, under the gospel, no need of restraining the natural appetites, but that all may be indulged with perfect safety and propriety, if there is only faith in Christ. Now it should be for ever understood, that faith in Christ is that which gives victory over these things, instead of sanctifying indulgence in them.

14. I next remark, that what may be expedient for one to possess, or enjoy, may not be so for another. On account of natural temperament, or the influence of grace, one man may have possessions without being a temptation to him, to draw him away from God, which another cannot have. It is never safe for us to possess or indulge in any thing because another does so; for it may be that we are not equally able to bear it.

15. Under some circumstances, we may not be able to bear, what under other circumstances we could bear without injury.

16. From this subject it is easy to see the importance of watchfulness, and giving the utmost attention to the occasions of our stumbling, whether proximate or remote. When I was a young convert, I was struck with this resolution of Edwards:

"Resolved, that when I do any conspicuously evil action, to trace it back till I come to the original cause, and then both carefully endeavor to do so no more, and to fight and pray with all my might against the original of it."

It is no doubt of the utmost importance, that our eyes should be continually open to all the influences that are acting on us, and affecting our moral characters. Every article of dress, every thing in our employments, amusements, companions, books, diet, in all our habits, and in all our ways, whatever leads us into sin, should be put away.

17. Some indulge temptation and sin, until so blinded and hardened, as to feel no condemnation, and think that all is well. Their consciences have become stupefied and remain indignantly silent. And what they once esteemed to be sin they no longer regard as such. They can now complacently indulge in what would once have made them tremble. And because they feel no condemnation, they imagine that they are not condemned. Now it is one thing to have a seared conscience, and to be in that negative state of mind in which there is no felt condemnation, and that active, positive, and conscious state of love to God and souls, in which the soul has the continual testimony that it pleases God.

18. All the promises in regard to support under temptation and deliverance from it, are to be understood to be upon the condition that we avoid and put away all temptation as far as we possibly can. We often find promises to which no express condition is annexed, but where a condition is either plainly implied or expressed in some other part of the word of God. Take the promise in 1 Cor. 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Here is a promise without any condition expressed with regard to deliverance from the power of temptation. But our text, is to be regarded as a condition annexed by Christ Himself to all promises of this stamp. And these passages together teach this doctrine, that we need not fall under the power of any temptation, that we cannot avoid or put away from us--that when we have gone the full length of sacrificing a right hand or a right eye, to be rid of temptation, that no unavoidable temptation shall come upon us, from which we shall not have grace to escape. And this is all that such promises can mean, when viewed in the light of the expressed or implied conditions of the gospel.

19. If we are not enabled to put away and overcome temptation, it is because we have no Savior. The Savior's name is Jesus, because He saved his people from their sins. If, therefore, you are not enabled to overcome your sins, it is because you reject the Savior.

20. How many are engaged in defending their idols and their lusts, rather than in putting them away.

21. If any thing is found to be a temptation and a cause of stumbling to us, we should never indulge or defend it, because others indulge in the same thing. Perhaps they may do it without its being an overcoming stumbling-block to them. Or if it does overcome and lead them into sin, their going to destruction is certainly no good reason why we should do so.

22. Where a thing may be reasonably suspected as the cause of our falling into sin, it should be put away. It sometimes happens, that we are not fully aware of what the particular thing is, in our habits, which grieves the Spirit of God, and yet have some or much reason to suppose that it is the practice or indulgence of some particular thing. A doubtful thing should never be allowed.

23. A thing may be overlooked as a cause or occasion of our stumbling, because it is not a proximate but a remote cause. The thing which acted immediately upon us to cause our fall, may perhaps be something that we cannot put away. But should we candidly inquire, we might find the more remote occasions, and by removing them, continue in a state of liberty.

24. If a man but love God, he will not, cannot rest until every cause of stumbling be searched out, and

removed. Can a man love God supremely, and yet find himself betrayed into sin against Him, and rest until he has searched out and removed the cause? No!

25. Those who secretly dislike the doctrine of entire holiness in this life, are not Christians. From the manner in which many professors of religion treat this question, it seems manifest that they feel a secret dislike to it. They seem indisposed to understand it. They appear to set themselves to object to and pervert it, rather than candidly and earnestly to investigate it, with a manifest desire that it might be true. What they say and write, often makes the impression upon those who hear and read, that there is in the bottom of their hearts a spirit of secret but deep opposition to it. It may be supposed by some, that this manifested opposition is because it is regarded as error, and that Christians will naturally and of right manifest opposition to error. I should be glad to believe, that this opposition is founded in the conviction that this doctrine is false; but there is one circumstance that seems to forbid accounting for this opposition upon this principle. When a doctrine is hated because it is false, the doctrine will be fairly stated and met, and hated for what it is, and not for what it is not. Whenever we see a mind betaking itself to misstatement, and misrepresentation, in order to evade a doctrine, it is difficult for us to believe, that the misrepresented doctrine is rejected because it is believed by the mind to be false. If the doctrine, as it is, were believed by the mind to be false, it would be stated and met as it is, and not misrepresented and misstated.

26. We see why so many, who admit the truth of the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, do not practically embrace it. They have some idol with which they will not part. Their right hand and their right eye are so dear to them, that they will not spare them for the sake of eternal life. Especially, they will not do this, as from the common sentiments of the Church, they think they can get along very well without. They seem to reason thus: "We are about as good as common Christians, although to be sure, we are in the practice of many sins. The great mass of Christians do not believe that entire sanctification in this life is necessary or even attainable. We can, therefore, satisfy ourselves with but partial sanctification in this life, and still go to heaven. Why then should we throw away all our idols, merely for the sake of entire sanctification here, when partial sanctification will, in the judgment of the Church, and even of the ministers, do just as well. Now it is doubtful whether any such state is really attainable; and if it is, as I can get to heaven just as well without, I will not be so extravagantly foolish as to part with a right hand or a right eye, for the sake of being wholly without sin in this life." Now this seems to be a statement in words of the real, though unexpressed sentiments, of many professors of religion. The truth is, they are unwilling to give up their sins, and they resolve, if possible, to get into heaven without. Let such hear the words of Christ: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

27. If a temptation is of such a nature, that it cannot be utterly put away, every thing should be done by us that can be, to destroy its influence over us. For example: Our appetites and passions cannot, at our will, be annihilated; but those things that excite them can be avoided.

28. How terrible is the delusion of those who expect to be sanctified, or even saved, in the courses of life which they are pursuing.

29. It is no wonder that the Church do not believe in the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life. They are well satisfied that, with their present habits and indulgences, they cannot be entirely sanctified. And as these habits and indulgences appear to be stereotyped, they reject the doctrine of entire freedom from sin in this life, as unreasonable.

30. Whenever all is done that can be done, to avoid temptation, and to put away whatever brings us into bondage to sin, we may expect, and are bound to expect, that no temptation shall come upon us, from the power of which we are not able to escape. It is then entirely within the reach of every individual to live in a state of entire consecration, or sanctification, to God.

And now, whatever you do, do quickly. Will you put away now and for ever those temptations that overcome you, which can be put away by you? And will you now commit yourselves to the keeping and protection of the Lord Jesus Christ, to sustain you against the power of those temptations which you cannot avoid? Or will you hold on to your idols but a little longer, until all is lost. Again I say, whatever you do, do quickly. Every moment's delay is grieving the Holy Spirit. And even while I speak, unseen hands may be ready to toll the knell of eternal death over your soul! while you sink, weeping and wailing, down the sides of the pit!

Professor of religion, and you, impenitent sinner, do you realize, that while I speak the curtain may be ready to drop, the scene close, and your soul shut up to the horrors of the second death! O, do you know, "that now of a long time your judgment lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not"--that the Spirit is grieved--God is provoked; Divine forbearance almost exhausted--and your soul for ever lost! Again I say, what you do, do quickly.

## **Design or Intention Constitutes Character**

Lecture XX  
October 21, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
President of Oberlin College

Text.--Psalm 28:4: "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors."

By endeavors in this text, I understand design, or intention.

In discussing this subject, I shall--

*I. Notice the distinction between intention and volition.*

*II. The distinction between an ultimate or supreme intention and a subordinate intention.*

*III. Show that moral character lies mainly in the ultimate or supreme intention of the mind.*

*IV. Show that the moral character or those volitions and outward actions, which are directed by the intention, is as the ultimate intention is.*

*V. Show when the intention is sinful.*

*VI. When it is holy.*

*VII. Show that a man's character, as distinguished from the character of any one of his acts, is as his supreme and ultimate intention is.*

### **I. The distinction between intention and volition.**

Intention is the mind's design, aim, or end. Not the outward object aimed at, but the inward design of the mind to secure a given object. Volition is the action of the will or those subordinate choices, which are produced and directed by the intention. In other words, intention is a state of the will--a permanent disposition or state of the will, in distinction from single volitions or actions of the will. Volitions, then, are, strictly speaking, the means used by the will, or the efforts which it makes to obtain the object of design or intention.

### **II. The distinction between an ultimate or supreme intention and a subordinate intention.**

An ultimate intention, end, design, or object, is the final end which the mind has in view, and that to which all other ends are subordinate, and to which they sustain only the relation of a means. For example:--A student may work--to get money--to purchase books--to obtain an education--to preach the gospel--to convert sinners--to glorify God. Here are several ends, subordinate to one supreme or ultimate end. The first end which the student has in view is to get money. But this is both an end and a means. His second end is to purchase books. A third end, the end for which he purchases books, is, to obtain an education. But his education is also a means to another end, which is to preach the gospel. This is also a means to another end, the conversion of sinners. And the conversion of sinners is a means to another end, which is, to glorify God.

### **III. Moral character lies mainly in the ultimate or supreme intention of the mind.**

- 1. It cannot lie in the outward actions. The outward actions of a man, when viewed apart from the intention, have no moral character, any more than the motions of a machine.
- 2. It cannot lie in volition, irrespective of intention, for the same volition may be holy or sinful, according to the intention. For example: I may will to use the name of God, and the moral character of this intention must depend upon the design I have in using his holy name. I may

will to go to a certain place, or to do a certain thing, and this willing or volition may be holy or sinful, as my design to go to that place or to do that thing is good or evil.

- 3. The reason of every man decides, that character lies in intention. If a man designs to do us evil, and by chance does us good, we do not thank him for it. And if a man designs to do us good, and without any fault of his own, it results in evil, we do not blame him.
- 4. The text assumes, that the moral character lies in endeavor or intention. Let the case of the student, already referred to, serve as an illustration. The student works to get money. But when we learn, that he intends to purchase books with his money, we cannot yet decide upon the moral character of what he is doing. Hence, we inquire what books he intends to purchase, and what he intends to do with them. We learn that he wants to obtain an education; but here we are as much at a loss as ever, to know what the moral character of his conduct is, and must inquire why he obtains an education? We are informed, that it is to preach the gospel. This looks well so far; but as yet we cannot decide upon the moral character of his conduct. He may intend to preach the gospel to promote his own interest, to gratify his ambition, or with some other sinister design. We must, therefore, pursue our inquiries, and know why he designs to preach the gospel. He replies, that it is to convert sinners. But this does not decide his moral character. Why does he wish to convert sinners? Is it that he may be thought and called a useful man, or thus promote his own reputation? We must, then, push our inquiry home, and ask, why he wishes to convert sinners? We are told that it is because he supremely loves God, and dearly loves the souls of men--that he desires to promote God's glory and their happiness, as things good in themselves--that but for this ultimate supreme end, he would not work to get money to buy books, &c.--that he is conscious, that the ultimate intention, that at which he aims, which is the mainspring and cause of all his volitions, and that to which all these other ends are subordinate, is the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom. Here, and not until we arrive here, have we any light in respect to the moral character of his present employment, laboring to get money.

#### **IV. The moral character of those volitions and outward actions which are directed by the intention, is as the ultimate intention is.**

- 1. Because, but for intention they would have no moral character at all.
- 2. The moral character must be decided by the ultimate intention, as we have just seen in the example of the student. We see him vigorously at work, and know that volition is the cause of all his outward actions. But the moral character of what he is doing cannot be in these volitions themselves, when viewed separately from the intention, in obedience to which they are exercised. We next see the student purchasing his books--and next, poring over his studies--and again, preaching the gospel. In all these instances, we see every busy volition continually at work. But not one of these volitions, when viewed separate from the intention, would have moral character, any more than the volitions of a brute. Nor does the moral character lie in any of the subordinate ends. To get money, to purchase books, to obtain an education, to preach the gospel, have none of them any moral character when viewed apart from the ultimate intention of the mind in doing these things. The reason and common sense of all men affirm this.



## **V. When the intention is sinful.**

- 1. When the intention is to do wrong, although the thing intended may not be in itself wrong. If it is thought to be wrong, and intended as wrong, it is wrong.
- 2. When the intention is to do a thing known to be wrong, not because it is wrong, but in spite of its being wrong. Multitudes of human actions come under this denomination; vastly more, no doubt, than under the first. It is believed that men seldom do wrong for the sake of the wrong; but that they generally do wrong, knowing it to be so, not for the sake of the wrong, but for some other reason, and in spite of the wrong.
- 3. When the intention is, to do or omit a thing, regardless of, and without inquiring into the moral character of that act or omission.
- 4. When the intention has no respect to the will of God.
- 5. When the intention is selfish. Whenever the ultimate end is to secure our own good, this is a state of selfishness. This is wrong, because our own is not the highest good, and that at which we ought ultimately and supremely to aim. God's glory, and the interests of his kingdom, are of infinitely more value than our own individual happiness. Whenever our ultimate intention is to secure our own happiness, our whole character and conduct is sinful, whatever means we may employ. We may attend to all religious duties, with the greatest zeal, give all our goods to feed the poor, our bodies to be burned, if we have not charity, and are not actuated by supreme love to God--if our ultimate intention is not to glorify Him, rather than to make ourselves happy--the foundation of our character is utterly wrong.

## **VI. When the intention is holy.**

When and only when it is the ultimate aim, object, or intention of the mind, to glorify God, and promote the good of the universe. If we design to glorify God as the means of promoting our own happiness, this is selfishness. To glorify and please God must be a thing intended and sought, for its own sake, and on its own account. And when this is the supreme and ultimate end at which we aim, the character is holy. In other words, none but a disinterestedly benevolent intention is holy.

If it be inquired, whether my designing or intending, and laboring to promote the glory of God, will not result in my own happiness, and may not therefore be regarded as the most remote or ultimate end at which I aim, I answer:

- 1. That supremely to aim at and labor for the promotion of God's glory, will doubtless promote my own happiness.
- 2. But my own happiness in this case, depends upon the disinterestedness of my intention of laboring to promote the glory of God. If, in laboring to promote the glory of God, my ultimate end is my own happiness, I cannot in this way be happy, any more than I could be happy in praying, if I should pray, not because of communion with God, but to promote my own happiness. I cannot be happy only as I do that which my whole nature approves. My whole

moral being decides, that God's glory and interests, are supremely important in themselves, and that I should seek to promote them for their own sake, and on their own account. In no possible way, therefore, can I be happy, only as I act in conformity with this stern and uncompromising dictate of my nature. My happiness, therefore, will result or not result, from my intending and laboring to glorify God, just in proportion to the disinterestedness of my intentions and labor. I repeat it, therefore, that although a man's happiness is a consequence of his intending and laboring to glorify God; yet the intention terminates not at all upon his own happiness as an ultimate end of pursuit, but upon the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom, as something infinitely important in itself.

**VII. A man's character, as distinguished from the character of any one of his acts, is as his supreme and ultimate intention is.**

- 1. We have seen, that the character of our acts is as the ultimate end is.
- 2. A man's character is made up of his ultimate or chief end. Thus, we speak of an avaricious man, an ambitious man, a disinterested man, meaning by such expressions to distinguish the character of the man, from the character of any one of his acts.

**REMARKS.**

1. The ultimate end which a man has in view in his conduct, may not always be that which occupies his thoughts, and his conduct may be sinful or holy without the ultimate intention being at the time the subject of consciousness, or even thought. The student's thoughts may be, for the time being, wholly upon his labor or his books; and yet he may be influenced by the ultimate end he has in view, whether it be ambition or disinterested love to God, without being at all conscious at the time, of being influenced by any other than the immediate end before him. But although the immediate object before him is the subject of his thoughts, still his labor or his study is holy or sinful, as his ultimate intention is.

2. There can be but two classes of mankind, in respect to moral character. There is but one right, ultimate end or intention, which is the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom. This ought to be the ultimate intention of every moral being in the universe. Every other ultimate end or intention is entirely wrong. So that there cannot, by any possibility, be more than two classes of moral beings, in respect to moral character, in the universe.

3. From this subject it is easy to see, that unregenerate sinners are, without exception, entirely depraved. We have seen, that a sinner's character is as his ultimate intention is. Every unregenerate sinner has a selfish ultimate or supreme intention, and is, therefore, in a state of total depravity.

4. From this subject we can see what regeneration is--that it consists in the change of the supreme or ultimate intention of the mind.

5. We can see that two persons may act precisely alike, be engaged in the same transactions, and in every respect be outwardly exactly alike, and yet possess moral characters precisely opposite. Nay, they may be both outwardly and inwardly, with the exception of their ultimate intention, exactly alike,

and yet possess opposite characters. They may both will to pray, to go to meeting, to perform every religious duty. They may will, do, and be exactly alike in every other respect, if their ultimate object or intention is not the same, their moral characters are, in the sight of God, totally unlike.

6. An action may be morally right, because the intention is so, and yet there may be a sinful ignorance connected with it. A man may mistake in the use of means to glorify God. If he honestly intended to glorify God, the action itself is not sinful, Yet, if he was culpably negligent in the use of the means of information, and has used improper means, through his ignorance, his ignorance is a sin.

7. From this subject we can see what we are to understand by the sin of ignorance. It is that ignorance itself, is a sin, when the means of information are neglected. If I act wholly from right intentions, that act cannot be in itself sinful; yet, if I am mistaken through ignorance, the ignorance itself may be sinful.

Objection. But to this it may be objected, that Paul blamed himself for doing what he verily thought he ought to do-- "many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

Ans. It is true, that in this case, Paul was to blame for doing what he verily thought he ought to do, because he was an impenitent sinner at the time, and his ultimate intention was not to glorify God; but he thought he ought to do it in obedience to the superstitious and persecuting notions of the Jews. Had he been a converted man at the time, and had his heart set upon glorifying God, he could not have thought as he did, that he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Therefore, notwithstanding he thought he ought to do it, his conduct was sinful, because the ultimate design or end of doing it was not to glorify God, but to gratify his Jewish prejudices.

8. You see the real distinction between true saints and hypocrites. It does not lie in the fact, that they pursue opposite courses of life, but in that they pursue substantially the same courses of life, with opposite ultimate intentions. The true Christians' ultimate intention being to glorify God; the hypocrite's intention being his own happiness.

9. It is easy to see the great danger of delusion, because the ultimate intention of the mind is so often and so easily overlooked. Here, for example, are two students, just commencing a course of study. Now how many subordinate ends must they pursue, and how remote, so to speak, is the ultimate end at which they aim. They both labor hard, exercise economy, study hard, and may preach zealously, and be equally useful; and yet their moral characters all along be entirely opposite; their thoughts being taken up so much with the different subordinate ends of pursuit, that they may easily overlook and keep out of view, the ultimate end or main spring of all their actions. But herein lies the moral character of all their conduct. And if they are ignorant or mistaken in respect to this, they may, at any period of their lives, drop into eternity with a false hope, but in a state of such deep delirium as to cry out, "Lord, Lord, open unto us. Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto you, I never knew you."

10. From this subject it is easy to see, that the sins of real Christians are accidental, in opposition to deliberate and habitual. In other words, that they consist in volitions rather than in deliberate intention. I have said, in a former part of this discourse, that the moral character of those volitions and

actions which are caused and directed by an ultimate intention, is as the ultimate intention is. This implies, as I intended it should, that some actions and volitions are not in obedience to an ultimate intention, but in opposition to it, and are caused by the desire of some present gratification. In other words, that they may not be in accordance with, but in opposition to the supreme and ultimate intention of the mind. The moral character of these acts must be determined by the particular design or intention that gave them birth. A man, for example, may set out to go on a foreign mission, with the ultimate intention of glorifying God. Yet, under the force of strong temptation, he may be driven off his course, and either commit a single act, or a series of acts, not in obedience to his ultimate intention, or in accordance with it. Nor yet, are these acts performed with the ultimate intention or in accordance with the ultimate intention of abandoning his missionary enterprise. These acts are not performed in obedience to any ultimate intention, either to glorify God, or to promote his own ultimate interests. But, if I may so speak, they fall out and leave a chasm in his usual course of conduct, through the force of temptation, without any change of his ultimate design. And the reason of them is, that for the time being and under the circumstances, the temptation has more power over his single volitions than his ultimate intention has. This is indeed a deep mystery, but so it is, as a matter of fact, however its philosophy is to be explained. I repeat it, then, that the sins of real Christians, while they are voluntary, are accidental, in opposition to deliberate and habitual.

11. We see why God does not and cannot deal with men in this world according to their real characters. Universalists have vainly asserted that He does; but every man knows, in his own experience, that he is not dealt with precisely according to his character in this life. Now it would create vast confusion, were God to deal with men according to their ultimate intentions, as they appear to Him. It is said that "the ploughing of the wicked is sin." Now upon what ground is it sin? The volitions that regulate the muscles in holding the plough are not sinful. It must be, therefore, that his ploughing is sin, simply because his ultimate intention is selfish. Should God punish men in this life, according to their real character or ultimate intention, it would require the confidence of angels so to believe that He was right as not to be stumbled by his conduct. One man would be punished for ploughing, and another for praying, and another for preaching, and others for multitudes of things, so far as human observation can go, that are good and praise-worthy. While, on the other hand, many actions would be rewarded, which, so far as human observation could go, would be pronounced sinful, It must, therefore, be true, that God does not and cannot deal with men in this world according to their real character, without perplexing and perhaps ruining the universe.

12. You see from this subject, the necessity of a General Judgment, when God shall disclose the real character of all mankind, to the whole universe, and deal with every man according as his work shall be.

13. Men will be rewarded according to their ultimate intentions, whether they have been able to carry it out or not. "Give them," says the Psalmist, "according to their endeavors." This is the language of inspiration. Here is one man, designed to be a missionary, to save souls, and glorify God. But his health, in the providence of God, has prevented. Be of good cheer, my brother. God will carry on his work without you, and reward you according to your intentions. Here is another man, who has devised and intended to execute liberal things for Zion, but his expectations have been blasted, and he has been unable to succeed according to his endeavors. Well done, good and faithful brother; thou hast done well that it was in thine heart to glorify God. Thou shalt be rewarded according to all that

was in thine heart.

14. We can see what permanent sanctification is, and when saints are permanently sanctified. They are permanently sanctified, when they arrive at that state in which they are not drawn aside in heart and in life, to will or to do what is inconsistent with the ultimate intention of glorifying God.

15. How many professors of religion will go down to hell with a lie in their right hand.

16. You can see the secret of the self-righteousness of sinners. They do not judge themselves by their ultimate intention, wherein their moral character lies, but by the subordinate ends at which they aim, If a sinner ploughs, he thinks, surely, there is no harm in this; but on the other hand, takes credit for it, as being in accordance with his duty. He maintains his family, goes to meeting, does thousands of things which professors of religion do. He supposes these things to be commendable and virtuous in themselves, irrespective of the ultimate design, which lies at their foundation, and is the cause of them. In this consists his sad and ruinous mistake.

17. In this same neighborhood lies the ruinous delusion of deceived professors.

18. A man may do wrong, without designing to do wrong. Indeed it is not common for men to aim at the wrong they do, and do things because they are wrong.

19. So also a man may do wrong, without designing to do a thing, notwithstanding it is wrong, but not for that reason.

20. A man sins unless he desires to do right, to act in accordance with his duty.

And now, beloved, when tried by this standard, is MENE TEKEL written upon your Christian character? Will you honestly go down upon your knees before God, and spread your whole heart out before Him? Will you honestly look into the foundation of your conduct, and inquire what is your ultimate and supreme intention? And will you remember...that according to your intention, God will deal with you in the solemn Judgment?

## **Confession of Faults**

Lecture XXI

November 4, 1840

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

In this discussion I shall show:

*I. What is intended by faults in this text.*

*II. To whom this passage requires confession to be made.*

*III. The design and use of confessing faults one to another.*

*IV. That we are under special obligation to pray for those who confess their faults.*

### **I. What is intended by faults in this text.**

- 1. Offenses against our neighbor.
- 2. Public offenses, or offenses against the public.
- 3. Secretly besetting sins, or those secret lusts and appetites, and passions, and temptations and states of mind that easily beset, and frequently overcome us.
- 4. Offensive and injurious traits of character. There are very few persons who have not more or less features of their character that are particularly offensive, either to good morals or good breeding, and are therefore injurious and disastrous in their tendencies and results. These are to be regarded not as isolated faults, but as faults of character--habitual faults, in opposition to accidental or occasional faults. All such faults should be confessed, one to another.
- 5. Such weaknesses and infirmities as lay us open to the power of temptation. These weaknesses may be owing to some constitutional infirmity, or they may arise out of evil habits that have acquired great power over us. Whatever they are, if they are faults in such a sense as to bring us into legal bondage to sin, they doubtless come within the scope of the Apostle's meaning.
- 6. All such things as grieve the Spirit of God, and hinder our growth in grace.

### **II. To whom this confession is to be made.**

- 1. To those especially who have been injured by our faults. That we are under obligation to confess to them, and make what reparation is in our power, is too plain to need comment.
- 2. Public sins are to be confessed to the public. By this I mean, that if sins have been injurious to the public, to the Church, or to the world, or to both, the confession should be as public as the injury.

- 3. But especially does this text require confession to our praying friends. "Confess your faults one to another," says the Apostle, "and pray one for another that ye may be healed." Although the duty of confessing sin to all that have been injured, is abundantly taught in other parts of scripture; yet in this particular text, the Apostle manifestly intended to enjoin the duty of confessing our faults to praying friends, for the purpose of enlisting their sympathies and prayers in our behalf.
- 4. And more especially still does he seem to require the duty of confessing our faults to eminently praying persons; for he immediately adds, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Hence it is plain, that the Apostle designed to direct persons to confess their faults especially to those who offer effectual fervent prayer.

### **III. The design and use of confessing faults one to another.**

- 1. To make known to Christian friends our real circumstances and wants, so as to enlist their sympathies and enable them to pray for us intelligently, and present our case before the Lord as it is. Without this knowledge, persons may either altogether neglect to pray for us, or if they pray at all, they may be in such ignorance of our real necessities as greatly to misconceive our wants, and therefore never benefit us by their prayers.
- 2. Another design and use of confessing our faults one to another is, to make reparation, so far as confession goes, for the wrong we have done. Until this is done, God will not forgive. For while we refuse to make the reparation within our power, it were not only unreasonable, but unjust in God to pardon us.
- 3. To remove temptation to hard feelings on the part of those who have been injured by us. To injure a man by our faults is bad enough, but to refuse or neglect to confess is often worse, and may often result in worse consequences, and prove a greater injury to him, than did our original fault. If, after we have done wrong, and injured a brother or a neighbor, and he knows that we have done so, we persist in refusing to confess, it is a grievous temptation to him to entertain hard and revengeful feelings toward us. And where this course is persevered in it often results in the greatest injury, if not in the absolute annihilation of the piety of the injured party. If, then, you have committed a fault, take the earliest opportunity to confess it, lest you lay a stumbling block, a grievous, fatal stumbling block, before your brother's feet.
- 4. Another design and use of confession is, to remove obstacles to the restoration of Christian confidence and fellowship. When you have been guilty of a fault, and this is known to your brethren, they cannot and ought not to have Christian confidence in you, until you confess your faults. And it sometimes comes to pass, that church members so long refuse to neglect to confess their faults to one another, as to render Christian confidence impossible. And members of the same church have little or no confidence in each other's piety. And whatever hope one may have, that another is pious, is founded not in the fact that he has any evidence that he is a Christian, but in the fact that he knows himself to be as bad as others, and is, therefore, constrained to hope for others upon the same principle that he hopes for himself. In such cases there is not and ought not to be Christian confidence and fellowship. Nor ought there to be any hope among them that they are Christians. For until they confess their faults one to another, and

can heartily pray one for another, they are as far as possible from having any evidence that they are the disciples of Christ. Now the only possible way in which Christian confidence and fellowship can be restored in such cases, is honestly and freely to confess your faults one to another.

- 5. Another design and use of confessing our faults is, to enlist Christian prayer and sympathy in our behalf. Nothing is more calculated to beget sympathy, Christian compassion, and brotherly love--to draw out the heart in fervent prayer--than to confess our faults and lay our hearts open to our friends and brethren.
- 6. To promote our own humility. Humility is a willingness to be known and estimated according to our real character. While we are unwilling to confess, we have no humility at all. Nothing is more directly calculated to deepen, perpetuate, and perfect humility, than a full and frequent confession of our faults.
- 7. Another design and use of confessing is, to promote our own watchfulness. The very fact of confessing our sins to one another, has a strong tendency to put us on our guard against repeating them. And on this account confession is of great importance to us.
- 8. To promote watchfulness over us. If we confess our faults to others, we call their attention to our faults, and easily besetting sins, and thereby lead them to notice our walk and conversation, and to watch over us with a greater degree of Christian faithfulness than they otherwise would.
- 9. Another design and use of confession is, to encourage Christian reproof and admonition from our brethren. If we do not confess our sins, but on the contrary, show a disposition to conceal them, our brethren know that we are proud, and have reason to believe, that we would take it amiss if they should reprove us; but if, on the contrary, we open our hearts to our brethren, we invite and encourage their Christian watchfulness and reproof, and thereby greatly promote their faithfulness to us.
- 10. Another design and use of confession is, to promote self-examination in them. Few things have a stronger tendency to fasten conviction upon the mind of a man, than to go to him with a frank and full confession of our sins. It is often holding up a mirror, in which he is constrained to behold himself. Under scarcely any circumstances have I seen myself so utterly vile, as when persons have been ingenuously confessing to me their sins. It has so strongly called my attention to the facts of my own history, as not unfrequently to fill me with shame and confusion of face.
- 11. Another design and tendency of confessing is, to impress others with the truth of the Christian religion. When ungodly men hear the frank and heart broken confessions of Christians, they are often struck with the contrast between this spirit and the spirit of the world. They secretly, and sometimes openly exclaim, if they see themselves to be so great sinners, what am I?
- 12. Another design and use of confession is, to insure spiritual healing. "If we confess our sins,



He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- 13. Confession is indispensable to forgiveness. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy."
- 14. It is indispensable to a present walking with God. If persons, for the time being, are brought into the light, and when they remember their sins, do not confess their faults, and ask the prayers and forgiveness of their brethren, they will undoubtedly and surely backslide. For in neglecting this duty, they will grieve the Spirit, harden their hearts, and immediately fall again under the power of sin.

#### **IV. We are under special obligation to pray for those who confess their sins.**

- 1. Because, by their confessions, we have been made acquainted with their necessities, and are, therefore, not in the dark, in respect to what we should pray for as it respects them. Now as light increases obligation, peculiar light in regard to their necessities, brings with it peculiar obligation.
- 2. We are under peculiar obligation to pray for them, because there is special encouragement to pray for those who are willing to confess their faults. We have express promises upon which we can fasten, in praying for such persons; especially when they not only confess but forsake their sins. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy."
- 3. To pray for them will be peculiarly useful for us, especially if we have been injured by them.
  - (1.) It will reveal to us the real state of our feelings towards them. Let a man attempt to pray for another, and he will soon discover the real state of his heart, in relation to that subject of prayer.
  - (2.) It will beget in us the spirit of forgiveness. We cannot pray that an individual may be forgiven, and be honest and sincere in this prayer, unless we honestly forgive him ourselves. And nothing is more highly calculated to beget in us a spirit of forgiveness, than to be much employed in praying for the forgiveness of others, especially for the forgiveness of those who have injured us.
- 4. The duty of praying for those who confess their sins, is expressly enjoined in the text, and therefore a special obligation exists, to make them particular subjects of prayer.

#### **REMARKS.**

1. We see from this subject, why so many are in bondage to sin. The fact is, they do not and will not confess their faults. They have too much regard to their own reputation, ingenuously to confess their faults; and hence they wear their galling chains and remain the miserable slaves of sin.
2. We see why there is so little Christian sympathy and love. So long as professors of religion remain

so ignorant of each other's history, joys, sorrows, trials, and besetting sins, there is no such foundation or reason for Christian sympathy and love, as there might be and ought always to be among the followers of Christ. We sometimes see two Christians who are in the habit of confessing their faults to each other, and disclosing their own experience to each other, and praying one for the other. In all such cases, without exception, you see much Christian sympathy and brotherly love. Such a course of conduct as this, is indispensable to Christians sympathy; and this ought to be universally understood by the Church.

3. This subject shows, that there is very little humility in the world. I have already said, that humility consists in a willingness to be known and estimated according to our real character. While there is so little confession as there now is in the Church of God, how can there be much humility?

4. We see why there is so little humility in the Church. If Christians would but begin, and make thorough work of confession, this would greatly promote their humility; but until they begin, cast away their pride, and address themselves in earnest to confessing their faults one to another, their pride will never be crucified, or their humility perfected.

5. There is but very little confidence among professors of religion, in each other's prayers. If there were, they would more frequently confess to their brethren, and beg them to pray, that they might be healed. It is often amazing to see how little confidence professors of religion have in prayer.

6. Living as they do, professors of religion have no right to have confidence in each other's prayers. And without utter presumption, it is impossible that they should. Professors of religion very generally know, that their own prayers are not answered; that they live in such a manner, as to have no right to expect an answer to their prayers; and from observation they perceive, that other professors of religion, with very few exceptions, live as they do. And in this view of the subject, how is it possible for them to have confidence in each other's prayers, so as to render it an object to solicit the prayers of their brethren.

7. There is here and there a professor of religion, who is regarded by other professors of religion, and by the Church generally, as one who prevails with God. And it is truly wonderful, that they do not resort to such persons, to confess their sins and ask their prayers. This can be accounted for only upon the supposition--

8. That there is very little honest and earnest desire to get rid of sin, among professors of religion. If they were really agonized, to get rid of sin, it does appear to me impossible that they should not avail themselves of the prayers and counsels of those whom they regard as eminent Christians, in order to get rid of their loathsome depravity. James Brainerd Taylor was, according to his own account of himself, in earnest to get rid of his sins. He believed the thing possible, and felt that it was indispensable to his usefulness as a minister. He gave himself up thoroughly to the work of getting away from his sins; and, as was very natural and scriptural, went to those whom he considered eminently pious and praying persons. To them he opened his heart and solicited their prayers in his behalf, that he might be healed. And, blessed be God, he was healed. And so, Christian, may you be healed, if you will go and do likewise, with as much honesty and earnestness as he did.

9. The fact is, that most professors of religion prefer remaining in bondage, to confessing that they are so. They wear a cloak over their chains, and while their hands are manacled, and they are fast bound in the chains of sin, the law in their members so warring against the law in their mind, as to keep them in a state of perpetual captivity, they gather their cloak of concealment all over them, try to cover up and conceal their loathsome servitude and detestable chains, rather than throw off the mask, confess their faults, and be healed. O professor of religion, what a miserable slave you are. Hold up your hands. Let us see if they are not chained. Lay aside your cloak. Are you not the bond-slave of Satan, or of lust, or of the world?

10. How shameful and lamentable it is, that persons regard their reputation more than they hate sin, and prefer concealment to humility, reputation to holiness, the good opinion of their brethren to the favor of God.

11. But in a very few cases, after all, do they by such concealment, secure any reputation for real piety. Although they are ashamed to confess, and do not confess what the difficulty is; yet, as a matter of fact, every discerning mind sees, that there is some difficulty--that they are not spiritual--that they do not walk with God--that they do not prevail in prayer. So that, after all, they gain nothing, even of reputation, by their concealment. And this is the folly of sin--a man under its dominion will think to cover it up. But while some particular form of it may be disguised, its existence in some form will be known, from the spirit and temper of the man, in spite of himself.

12. Confession, to be of any avail, should be ingenuous and full, so as to give our brethren as full a view of our real character and wants as possible; so that they may understand, as far as may be, the worst of our case, and know how to present it before the Lord. If individuals will but half confess, they will find that such confessions will do no good, but only harden their hearts. You must fully confess, and cover up no essential feature of your depravity, if you expect to be healed.

13. Few things are so useful and important to us and to those against whom we have sinned, as to confess our faults to them. When difficulties have existed between brethren, nothing can restore permanent confidence, but a full, thorough, hearty, mutual confession of faults, one to another, and praying one for another, that they may be healed.

14. There are but very few professors of religion who seem to know, or believe, that there is any such thing as spiritual healing in this world. They seem to reason thus: "Of what use would it be for me to confess my sins, as I am continually sinning? Why should I trouble the brethren with a detail of my sins, for they are as constant as the flowing of the waters? Why should I make myself the loathing of the Church of God, by continually confessing my sins? It will do no good. I shall continue to sin on as long as I live; and I may as well, therefore, groan under my chains and continue this infernal service till I die. As to ever being healed, so as to get away from my sins, in this life, it is out of the question."

Now I see not why all this is not very natural and reasonable, upon the supposition that Christians have no reason to expect, in this life, entire emancipation from the bondage of sin. But brother--sister--let me beseech you to be no longer deceived in this thing. Remember, that Christ is faithful, who has expressly promised, that if you confess your sins, He will not only forgive you, but "cleanse you from all unrighteousness."

## **Weakness of Heart**

Lecture XXII

November 4, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Ezek. 16:30: "How weak is thine heart."

In this connection the Prophet is speaking of the Church, in reference to her past history. He says nothing of the real piety of the different generations of the Church; but in view of all her backslidings and inconsistencies, he exclaims, "How weak is thine heart!"

In discussing this subject, I will show:

- I. What is to be understood by the term heart, in this text.*
- II. What is implied in weakness of heart.*
- III. Mention some things that are evidences of a weak heart.*
- IV. Some things that cause weakness of heart.*
- V. The remedy for weakness of heart.*
- VI. What is implied in strengthening the heart.*

### **I. What is the heart.**

Under this head I remark:

- 1. The language is figurative of necessity, as we have no language by which to represent states of the mind, only as we seize upon some analogy that exists between mental states and material things by which to express these mental states.
- 2. The term heart is used in a great variety of senses in the Bible. Sometimes it manifestly means the conscience--sometimes the whole mind, or soul--but whenever it is spoken of as a state of mind that has moral character, and as the foundation or fountain of moral exercises, it must represent a voluntary state of mind. When it is thus used, it cannot mean any faculty of the

mind, but the particular attitude of the will in relation to moral subjects. There must be some analogy between the fleshly organ of the body, called the heart, and the heart of the mind. The bodily heart propels the blood and keeps up the vital action of the whole system. It is in this sense the center of organic life. Out of it flows, by the force of its own contractions, that vital current, which sustains both organic and animal life.

- 3. The heart of the mind is a voluntary disposition or preference of the mind. It is a disposition in opposition to a single exercise. It consists in a permanent, though voluntary attitude of the will, in relation to God and spiritual objects. It is a ruling disposition, or preference, in such a sense as to be the fountain, out of which, as it were, flow those individual volitions and exercises of mind, that make up its moral history. Therefore, as the bodily heart sustains organic and animal life, and may be regarded as the fountain, from which the vital current flows, so the mental heart, this ruling disposition or preference of which I have spoken, is the fountain from which obedience to God, or spiritual life flows.

## **II. What is implied in weakness of heart.**

- 1. Not an opposite, heart ruling preference or attitude of the will. This cannot be; for the heart consists in a supreme disposition and ruling preference. Now it is impossible that there should be two supreme and opposite dispositions, or preferences in exercise at the same time.
- 2. Not a divided heart. This also is impossible. Let it be distinctly kept in mind, that the spiritual or moral heart is a supreme disposition, or ruling preference of the will. Now it is impossible that this should be divided. By a weak heart, therefore, cannot be meant a divided heart.
- 3. Not a wicked heart, in such a sense as to be the cause of wicked thoughts, volitions, emotions, or actions. This cannot be. A regenerate heart is a holy disposition, a holy, ruling preference of the will. It is impossible, therefore, that a regenerate heart should be a wicked heart, in such a sense as to be the cause of any sinful emotion or affection.
- 4. But by a weak heart is intended, that this ruling preference or disposition of the will has not, for the time being, and under the circumstances, such efficiency as successfully to resist temptation to specific sins. The regenerate heart is not the cause of the sin; but the sin is in spite of the regenerate heart. That is--temptation prevails, and occasions specific exercises of the will; not in accordance with the regenerate heart; but, in opposition to it. Just as a wife, who loves her husband with a supreme affection, may, by the force of temptation, be betrayed into an individual exercise or act that is inconsistent with the general state and supreme attitude of her will; and just as parents, who love their children with the most intense and absorbing affection, may, through the force of temptation, feel exceedingly provoked with them, and for the time being, exercise feelings that are entirely in contrast with the state of their hearts toward their children. Every parent, and perhaps every husband and wife can testify, that such facts may exist, whatever their philosophical explanation may be.

## **III. Some things that are evidences of a weak heart.**

- 1. When there is great constitutional susceptibility to temptation. When the heart, or ruling

disposition, is vigorous and healthy, it is difficult to get the attention of the mind to those things that are inconsistent with it. Take, for example, the case of a young convert, who has been intemperate. While in the healthy exercise of his first love, he abhors the thoughts of his former companions, and will not allow the thought of ardent spirits to remain for a moment in his mind; but, should he leave his first love, the tendencies of his constitution would soon resume their control over him. He might then be unable to resist temptation to intemperance, if he should again come in contact with his old acquaintances, or within the smell of a bar-room. Just so a convert who has been licentious, in the healthy exercise of his first love, would so abhor his former ways, as not to suffer licentious thoughts to occupy his mind for a moment. A harlot might pass before him, at the very sight of whom his whole soul would recoil; and no other than feelings of the utmost disgust and loathing be excited. But should he leave his first love, his abused constitution would become so susceptible to the influence of temptation, as might very probably cause him to fall. Let it be understood, then, that when there is a great constitutional susceptibility, to temptation--when the attention of the mind is easily taken--when artificial or constitutional appetites and passions are easily awakened, and the mind easily thrown into a state of fermentation, in the presence of temptation, it is a sign of weakness of heart. The ruling disposition of the mind is not in a healthy and efficient state.

- 2. Another evidence of weakness of heart, is a want of firmness in the will, whenever a temptation is presented to the mind. When the heart is strong, or the ruling preference in a healthy state, temptation cannot prevail, because of the great and almost invincible firmness of the will. Thus, should a temptation to conjugal infidelity, be laid before a young bride, when in the healthy and energetic exercise of deep affection for her husband, she might sooner submit to be murdered, than consent to the embraces of another than her husband. But in the weakness of her heart, had she little or no affection for her husband, there might be such an utter want of firmness in her will, as greatly to expose her to seduction. Just so in the case of a young convert. In the healthy exercise of his first love, he might sooner suffer martyrdom than consent to sin. But should his heart become weak--should he leave his first love--no such firmness and stability of preference would remain, as to overcome and put down temptation. But on the contrary, whenever his emotions became excited, by the presence of some tempting object, he would find there were no firmness and strength of resolution in his will to resist temptation.
- 3. When a temptation is presented, and you find it difficult to resolve against indulgence, it is because of the weakness of your heart. Suppose a man who has been formerly intemperate, licentious or gluttonous, finds it, in the presence of temptation to the commission of any of these sins, difficult to resolve against indulgence. He may know, that if his heart is regenerate at all, it is in a state of extreme weakness. If, as a matter of fact, he does not find it easy promptly to resolve against indulgence, and to carry out this resolution in corresponding action, it is because of the weakness of his heart.
- 4. When you find it difficult to pray, honestly and earnestly, against a particular temptation, it is because of the weakness of your heart; that is--admitting that your heart has been regenerated. It must be owing either to the wickedness or weakness of the heart, and it may be consistent with either. If the heart has not been regenerated, it is wicked, and would, of course, prevent an honest and earnest appeal at the throne of grace against temptation; but if it has been

regenerated, and become weak, temptation may get such a hold of the mind as to render it difficult to pray with perfect honesty and great sincerity against a given temptation, under circumstances, of peculiar excitement.

- 5. When you find it difficult to divert attention from an object of temptation, it is because of the weakness of your heart. If the heart, or ruling disposition, is in a healthy or efficient state, the attention will be naturally and promptly diverted from a seductive object. But when you find it difficult to divert your attention, and find that, as a matter of fact, the object has got possession of your thoughts, and your excited feelings are clamoring for indulgence, there is great weakness of heart, and the most imminent peril. Escape for your life, or you fall.
- 6. When former resolutions are found to be of no avail in the presence of temptation, it is because of the weakness of the heart. No resolution can prevail to put down temptation, unless the resolution is supported at the time of the temptation by the healthy efficiency of the heart. If the resolution was made when the heart was strong and vigorous it will be of no avail, unless its foundation remain firm. Thus, a resolution, never to touch a drop of ardent spirits, might be made in the ardor of the young convert's first love; but should he leave his first love, his resolution would be as yielding as air, in the presence of temptation. When, therefore, you find that your resolutions, to resist sin, obey God, and lead a holy life, are of no avail, in the presence of temptation, it is certain, either that your heart has never been regenerated, or that at present it has no efficiency, as is extremely weak.
- 7. When temptation easily excites anger, ambition, envy, pride, vanity, lust, or any other unhallowed emotion, or affection, it is certain, either that the heart has never been regenerated, or that it is extremely weak.
- 8. When, in the presence of temptation, and under the force of excited feeling, the soul loses an apprehension of the guilt and ill-desert of that sin to which it is tempted, the heart has either never been regenerated, or it is extremely weak. If, when the passions become excited, or the appetite for food, in the presence of some tempting dish, the mind finds it difficult to realize the great guilt of gluttony, or the indulgence of passion, the heart must be either wholly unregenerate, or in a state of great weakness.

#### **IV. Causes of weakness of heart.**

- 1. Ignorance. Of course the stability of any preference, its efficiency, must depend, in a great measure, upon the reasons that are before the mind for the exercise of such a state of will. Without the true knowledge of God there can be no true love to Him. And our love to Him can never exceed our knowledge of Him. Our estimate of spiritual and divine things must depend upon our knowledge of them. Where, therefore, there is great ignorance of God and of divine things, there will be of course a proportionate instability, and want of efficiency in the ruling preference or heart.
- 2. Unbelief is another fruitful source of weakness of heart. God and the things of God are realities only to our minds in proportion to our faith. And it is unreasonable to expect any efficiency in the ruling preference or heart, unless faith is active, and eternal things appear as

realities to the mind.

- 3. The state of the physical system may be and often is a cause of great weakness of heart. Ill health in general, may be expected to render the actions of the mind feeble. But especially diseases of the brain, spinal marrow, or diseases located in, or sensibly affecting any of those organs that strongly sympathize with the brain, will of course greatly disturb the healthy action of the mind, and not unfrequently render the heart, or ruling preference, extremely weak.
- 4. All improper indulgences weaken the heart, just as they weaken the conscience. Every one knows, that to persist in any thing to which the conscience is opposed, gradually weakens, until it not unfrequently, either entirely, or in a great measure, suspends the action of conscience, in respect to particular things. In like manner, any improper indulgence of appetite, passion, or the indulgence of any unlawful exercise of mind whatever, weakens the heart or the influence of the ruling disposition or preference of the mind.

#### **V. The remedy for weakness of heart.**

Wait on the Lord. Ps. 27:14: "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." Isa. 40:31: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." In these passages, the remedy for a weak heart is explicitly pointed out by God Himself. But here it should be inquired, what is implied in "waiting upon the Lord?" I answer:

- 1. It does not imply sitting still in apathy, and leaving God to strengthen our heart in his own time and way, irrespective of our own exertions. Many persons seem to think themselves waiting upon the Lord, when they give themselves up to float on upon the stream of life, without at all concerning themselves whether they are holy or sinful, while they profess to be waiting God's time.
- 2. Waiting upon the Lord does not imply a self-righteous betaking ourselves to prayer, and the use of means, with the expectation that we shall in this way recommend ourselves to God. But--
- 3. Waiting upon the Lord does imply, giving ourselves up to prayer--a waiting in the constant attitude of prayer and supplication before God.
- 4. It implies perseverance in prayer, and in the use of all the means of knowledge and grace, that are essential to strengthening our hearts.
- 5. It implies repentance and putting away our sins.
- 6. It implies confession and restitution in all cases of wrong.
- 7. It implies great fervency of importunity.
- 8. It implies faith in the promises of God.



- 9. It implies submission to the wisdom and will of God, in respect to the time and manner of conferring the blessing upon us.
- 10. It implies a willingness on our part, to have Him make use of any means which He sees to be necessary to strengthen our hearts--a willingness to have Him take away our idols, property, friends, health, life, or any thing that is necessary to strengthen our hearts and make us holy.

## **VI. What is implied in strengthening the heart.**

- 1. An increase of knowledge. In order to strengthen our hearts, we need to know and thoroughly to consider those things which are calculated to wean us from sin, and to strengthen our preference and purpose in the divine life.
- 2. It implies an increase of faith. Strengthening the heart must necessarily depend upon an increase of faith. For faith is always the condition of true love to God and stability in his service. It is certainly impossible, that the mind should be brought under the influence of divine considerations, any farther than they are believed.
- 3. It implies an increase of love. Supreme love and supreme preference, are the same thing.--Therefore, strengthening the heart, of course, is an increase of love to God and divine things.
- 4. It implies such an absorption of the mind in God, as to break the power of temptation. I say, to break the power of temptation. What power could temptation have over a man, if he stood at the solemn Judgment, or saw himself to be standing out in the broad sunlight of God's countenance? In such circumstances, temptation would pass by him like the idle wind.
- 5. It implies such a swallowing up of the attention and affections in God, as in a great measure to prevent the soul from being tempted. By this I do not mean, that the mind cannot, in such circumstances be tempted; but that it is much more difficult for temptation at all to gain the attention of the mind, or disturb it in the least degree. Temptation implies, of course, that to some extent, the mind is brought to attend to the temptation. When, therefore, the attention is so fixed and riveted, when the heart is so enlarged and strengthened, as that the whole soul is swallowed up in God, that soul may say, as Christ did, "The prince of this world cometh but hath nothing in me;" no unsubdued lust, passion, or appetite remains, upon which to fasten a temptation.

## **REMARKS.**

1. A great many persons have a very weak heart, who are not at all aware of it; because they make very little or no effort to resist sin. Making no effort to resist, they of course do not know how weak they would find themselves, should they attempt to resist. They are literally "led captive by Satan at his will," and of course have no idea of the weakness of their hearts.

2. Many are sensible of their weakness, but make no other than legal efforts to escape. They are trying to resist sin by resolutions and promises, and struggling in their own strength. They do not seem to

know, that unless their heart is strengthened all their resolutions, founded upon legal considerations, will be of course as yielding as air. They are convicted of sin, distressed, ashamed, and agonized--sometimes almost despairing, and then encouraging themselves, and resolving, and renewing their resolutions, and binding themselves by oaths and promises, the most solemn; but all to no purpose; for they are not supported by the active exercise of supreme love to God. Their flesh will therefore, of course, be too strong for resolutions not founded in deep affection for God.

3. Others, still, err, by going to the opposite extreme. They make no dependence upon legal efforts, nor indeed do they make any efforts at all; but in Antinomian security, settle down in an apathy which they call peace, and thus tempt Christ. They call that faith which presumptuously throws the responsibility of keeping them, upon Christ, in such a sense as to exclude the active exercise of their own agency.

4. The providence of God is designed to develop the weakness of the hearts of his people, and make them see how much they are dependent upon his grace to strengthen them. It often comes to pass, that individuals suppose their sins are dead, and that they have really overcome for ever certain temptations; and, in this state they are apt to forget, that the ruling efficiency of their former habits of mind is suspended only by the continual agency and grace of God. Now if you forget, that your sins are kept under only by the continual agency of God, his providence will soon develop your weakness, and teach you, doubtless to your sorrow and confusion of face, that your enemies are not dead, but only kept from having dominion over you, by the constant presence and agency of the Holy Spirit.

5. From this subject we can see why Paul took pleasure in infirmities. It was, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. 2 Cor. 12:7-10: "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong." Here Paul found, as a matter of fact, that his infirmities, that is, his weaknesses, emptied him of self-dependence, and this led him to put Christ in place of his resolutions. So that, instead of depending upon his legal efforts and resolutions, he depended on Christ.

6. You see what entire and permanent sanctification is. It consists in such a strength of heart, as will resist all temptation to sin.

7. Those who have a wicked heart are not born again. A weak heart is not a wicked heart, as I have already said, in such a sense as to be the cause of wicked thoughts, emotions, and actions.

8. A strong heart, and a clean heart, are synonymous terms.

9. Whenever the heart is weak, the cause of this weakness, whatever it is, must, if possible, be put away. Sometimes the cause is physical. It lies in the indulgence of appetite or passion. Sometimes in such a state of the body as to render the healthy operations of the mind impossible. Therefore, in

waiting upon the Lord, to renew our strength, we must strive to do all that in us lies, to put away the cause of the weakness of our heart.

10. Whenever we have done this, and are waiting upon the Lord according to his directions, we are bound to exercise the most unwavering confidence, that He will strengthen our hearts. "Wait then, I say, on the Lord."

## **A Single and an Evil Eye**

Lecture XXIII

December 2, 1840

by Charles Grandison Finney  
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Text.--Matt. 6:22, 23: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

In this discussion I will show:

*I. What is implied in singleness of eye.*

*II. What is implied in an evil eye.*

*III. That singleness of eye will insure a knowledge of truth and duty.*

*IV. An evil eye will insure darkness and delusion, both in regard to doctrine and duty.*

### **I. What is implied in a singleness of eye.**

This language is of course figurative. By a single and an evil eye, we are to understand the Savior as representing a state of mind. "The light of the body," He says, "is the eye: If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." It is a matter of common knowledge, that the eye sometimes becomes so disordered as to discover objects double, and in a manner so obscure or fallacious, as naturally to deceive and mislead the person who possesses it. By a single eye, then, is meant, an eye in its perfect state, when it sees objects as they are, with such distinctness as to give the mind correct information with respect to the objects of vision.

When this figure is applied to the mind, it must represent the supreme and ultimate intention of the

mind. When the ultimate end or intention of the mind is single, and just as it ought to be, the eye of the mind may then be said to be single. For the mind has its eye upon but one great absorbing object. This state of mind implies:

- 1. Supreme love to God. Of course, if the mind has but one great absorbing object or end in view, and that end is right, the end must be supremely to honor, please, and glorify God. This certainly implies supreme love to God.
- 2. It implies disinterested love to Him. Unless this love be disinterested; that is, unless God is loved for what He is, for his own sake, and not for the sake of making ourselves happy; to honor Him is not a supreme or ultimate end; but our own happiness is the end, and the love and service of God merely a means for the promotion of that end.
- 3. It implies a state of entire consecration. That Christ intended to be understood, by a single eye, to mean a state of entire consecration to God, is evident from what follows the text. He says-- "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." It is very plain, that the mind's eye is not right, unless the soul is supremely and only devoted to the love and service of God. Nothing less than a state of entire consecration to God can be intended by a single eye.

## **II. What is intended by an evil eye.**

An evil eye is that which has more than one object before it, or sees objects double. When this figure is applied to the mind it means, that state of mind in which objects are seen through a selfish medium, or when the mind has two objects in view, a legal intention to serve God, but an ultimate intention to serve self. By a legal intention to serve God I mean, not that intention which is founded in supreme, disinterested love to God, which aims at honoring and glorifying Him, as an ultimate end; but an intention to serve God as the means of our own happiness, the ultimate intention being self-interest, and the intention to serve God, being a subordinate end.

## **III. Singleness of eye will insure a knowledge of truth and duty.**

- 1. This is plainly taught in the text: "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Light means knowledge, truth. Now when Christ says, if your eye be single your whole body shall be full of light, what less can He mean than that the soul that has a single eye, shall be rightly instructed in all that is essential for it to know.
- 2. This will be the natural result of singleness of eye:
  - (1.) Because it will beget honest inquiry.
  - (2.) It will beget earnest, diligent inquiry
  - (3.) It will secure the right and the best use of the necessary means of knowledge.

- (4.) It will beget unfailing perseverance in the acquisition of knowledge.
- (5.) The state of the will, will not prevent the perception of truth and evidence.
- (6.) But the state of the will, will be such as to favor the perception, and insure the reception of evidence, when it is within its reach.
- (7.) In this state of mind, the Spirit will not be resisted and quenched; but on the contrary, his influences will be sought and devoutly cherished.
- (8.) His instructions will be obeyed, his slightest motions heeded, and the whole soul will be delivered up to his guidance.
- (9.) Being in the same state of mind in which God, and Christ, and the inspired writers were, he will naturally understand them. If you have the same end in view, deeply sympathize with God, and are in the same state of mind in which He is, the language in which He expresses his own state of mind, will be to you the most intelligible language possible. Who does not know that persons possessing the same spirit, not only adopt the same or similar language, to express their ideas and feelings, but naturally understand each other's language perfectly? To each other they are perfectly intelligible, while to those in a different state of mind, they are unintelligible, in precise proportion to the diversity of their states of mind. Hence, the Bible is a very unintelligible and uninteresting book to an impenitent sinner. To a Christian of but little experience, who has but little religion, the Bible is in a great measure unintelligible, and he takes comparatively little interest in it; while to the Christian who lives in a state of entire consecration to God, it is not only one of the most intelligible, but altogether the most interesting book in the universe.
- (10.) In this state of mind your experiences will be such as to make the teachings of the Bible, and especially the most spiritual portions of the Bible, plain to you. Whenever you are addressed upon a subject upon which you have experience, and in a manner and language that accords with your experience, you understand the speaker or writer with great ease and perfection; but in just as far as he departs from your experience, he is unintelligible to you, in the same manner and for the same reason, as if he spake to you in an unknown tongue. Because, you do not understand language, any farther than it accords with your experience. Words are only signs of ideas; and suppose words are used which are signs of ideas that are not in your mind, you do not get, and cannot possibly get any information from such teaching as this. For to you it is no teaching at all.
- (11.) This state of mind will insure great communion and great power with God. The soul that lives in a state of entire consecration to God, can come to Him with as much confidence, and with indescribably more assurance than ever a child came to an earthly parent. This, if you have ever been in this state, you know from your own experience. When you live all the time in a state of such deep communion with God, you feel the strong confidence and assurance, that you know how He feels, by your own experience.

Thus you know how Christ feels, from what motives and feelings He gave his life for sinners; and are conscious, that you are willing yourselves to make up in your bodies the sufferings that remain, and to lay down your lives for the world, and for the Church of God. In this state of mind, I say, you will naturally and certainly have great power with God, and will prevail.

#### **IV. An evil eye will insure darkness and delusion, both in regard to doctrine and duty.**

- 1. This is expressly taught in the text: "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Mark--the whole body shall be full of darkness. Darkness means error and delusion. Now by such language as this the Savior must have intended to teach, that a selfish mind would be, and should be, full of error and delusion, or great questions of doctrine and duty. And by a selfish mind, in this connection, is intended, one that is not in a state of entire consecration to God; but is influenced by selfish considerations.
- 2. Darkness and delusion will be the natural and inevitable results of this state of mind:
  - (1.) Because selfishness will prevent inquiry; especially honest, diligent, and persevering inquiry.
  - (2.) Because the state of the will, will prevent the perception and reception of evidence. Few persons seem to be aware of the extent of the influence of the will, over the decisions of the understanding. I have, for many years, been so circumstanced as to have an opportunity, almost continually, to observe the developments of mind, in this respect; and have often been astonished to see, to what an extent the will influences human opinion. Almost every one has observed, that under circumstances of strong excitement, it is of little or no use to reason with a man, against his prejudices. I have had repeated opportunities to observe, with pain, that prejudice, a committed state of mind, and many other considerations, and things, will so influence the will, as wholly to exclude the light of truth from the understanding. On many subjects, it seems next to impossible to convince a man, against his will; while, on the other hand, a man will believe almost any thing which he is disposed to believe. And the credulity of mankind, on subjects that accord with the state of their will, and in regard to doctrines and things which they are strongly disposed to believe, is as surprising as their incredulity upon subjects opposed to their will. It is amazing to hear infidels and sceptics contend, that human belief is involuntary, and that men necessarily believe what they do, when the real palpable voluntariness of human opinion and belief, on almost every subject, is as striking and apparent to a considerate observer, as almost any fact of human history.
- 3. A man under the influence of an evil eye, or in other words, a selfish heart, will not practice the truth, and therefore he cannot teach it. There are multitudes of truths, which can be seen and understood no farther than other truths are first seen and understood. And multitudes of truths are never understood, any further than they are experienced. Take, for example, the subject of temperance. Suppose you preach strictly temperance principles to a man who has always been in the habit of drinking ardent spirits freely. Now there are certain things which you can make him understand. If he has been a habitual drunkard, by describing to him the feelings of a

drunkard, he can understand you; because upon this subject he has experience. Words are signs of ideas; and to him they will mean nothing more, than the idea represented by the word in his mind. You can therefore make him understand something of the evil of drunkenness; and yet, if he has always been in habits of intoxication, from his earliest recollection, you cannot, in any language whatever, so contrast the experience, follies, and health of a drunkard, with those of a strictly temperate man, as to make him understand you. He knows not what temperance is. He knows not what health is. He knows not what that state of mind is, which is the natural result of temperance and good health. Peradventure, you can fasten conviction upon him, of the great evils of intemperance, from the fact, that he had experience upon that part of the subject; and in this way you can get so much light in upon his mind, as to break him off from his cups. Now in proportion as he becomes a sober man, temperate, and healthy, his experience will enable you so to contrast temperance with intemperance, as fully to impress his mind with both sides of the question; and thus lodge in his mind the full weight of the momentous considerations in favor of temperance. But in all this process, it is easy to see that he must necessarily begin with the A, B, C of both the doctrines and the experience of temperance. Break him off from ardent spirits, and after a time he is better prepared to see and feel the indispensable necessity of universal temperance. Break him off from every thing that intoxicates, and his experience will soon enable him to understand the importance and necessity of breaking off from all innutritious stimulants in diet. When he has abandoned all these, his experience will, in a little while, enable him to understand the importance of selecting the most bland unstimulating kinds of food. This experience will naturally prepare his mind to understand the importance of universal cleanliness and chastity, the strictest subjection of the appetites and propensities, to the great and universal law of temperance. And in short, as he goes from step to step in reform, and no farther than he does so, is he in circumstance, to see, feel, understand, and appreciate arguments in favor of farther reformation.

Now what is true on the subject of temperance, holds true on nearly every practical question; and especially is this true on subjects that pertain to personal holiness. If a man will not practice he cannot learn. Talk to an impenitent sinner of entire sanctification. Holiness is so entirely opposite to his experience, that he does not at all understand you. Talk with him about his sins, and his convictions, his fears, misgivings, and on every subject that is with him a matter of experience, and so far he will understand you; but talk to him of entire sanctification, and he gets no idea of what you mean. Therefore, the only possible way to deal with him is, to begin upon those subjects upon which he has experience, and bring him to see and to feel, that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God. This will lead him to see, admit, and experience the doctrine of repentance. Now proceed, from step to step, lead him forward, and as his experience enlarges, his capacity of understanding about sanctification, its desirableness, its indispensable necessity, will be perceived and felt by him. But no farther than he practices can he properly learn. When he stops and refuses to follow truth any farther in practice, right there the clouds of darkness will shut down, round about him. And it is only as he goes forward, from step to step, practicing or experiencing one truth after another, as it is presented, that he can, by any possibility, come to an understanding and knowledge of the truth. Let it be ever remembered, therefore, that he who will not practice will not learn. In other words, unless his eye be single, his whole body will be full of darkness.

- 4. Selfishness must render the Bible unintelligible to him who has an evil eye. To him it is a sealed book. It is uninteresting, enigmatical, self-contradictory, and any thing and every thing, but interesting and intelligible. The fact is, its Author and the inspired writers, were in states of mind the direct opposite of selfishness. To a selfish mind they must, therefore, of necessity, speak in an unknown tongue.
- 5. A selfish mind will not only find the Bible unintelligible, but in a great many instances, will naturally understand it as meaning the direct opposite of what it does mean. Nor is the fault at all in the Bible, or in its Author, but arises necessarily out of a selfish state of mind. For example--when God speaks of being angry with his enemies, as the sinner has never experienced any thing but a selfish anger, he naturally understands God's anger to be like his own. And whenever God speaks of having any state of mind, or doing any thing, sinners naturally interpret this language by their own experience. And thus it comes to pass, as God says, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself." Interpreting, as they naturally will, the language of the Bible by their own experience, they ascribe the same motives, affections, and passions to God, which they, themselves have experienced--not understanding at all, that all these states of mind in God are truly and infinitely benevolent.

It is a familiar and a true saying, that men judge others by themselves. To a truly holy mind, the Bible is not only the most interesting, but the most intelligible book in the world; while infidels exclaim, that it is blasphemy to ascribe such feelings and conduct to God; and therefore, that the Bible must be a libel upon his character. Now for this there can be no remedy, only as they become benevolent. If they will but begin to do the truth, so far as they can understand it, and practice one truth after another, until they come into the state of mind, in which the inspired writers were, they will then understand the Bible, and not till then.

- 6. A man who has an evil eye, will not have the Spirit of God to enlighten his mind in regard to truth, and will, therefore, never understand it.

#### **REMARKS.**

1. A selfish minister is a blind leader of the blind. This is the mildest language that truth or inspiration can use, in regard to an ambitious, a temporizing, a man-fearing, and, in short, a selfish minister. His eye is evil. His whole body, as Christ is true, or in other words, his whole mind, is full of darkness on spiritual subjects.

2. Such a minister will certainly, in many things, mislead his flock. He sees no truth spiritually, and therefore cannot safely be trusted as a spiritual guide. Nay, to trust him is ruin and death.

3. Selfish minds are very willing to be led, by selfish ministers, as they naturally see eye to eye. Having similar experiences, they will naturally understand each other. And a carnal church will naturally be pleased with a carnal minister. And a carnal minister will not see the defects of a carnal church. And thus they will be able to walk together, because they are agreed.

4. The doctrine of the text implies to the preparation and delivery of sermons. If a minister's eye is



single he will naturally select those subjects of discourse that are suited to the state of his people. He will naturally discuss them in a way, and deliver them in a manner, that will be edifying to the people; simply because that is the object at which he aims. Having his eye single to the holiness of the Church, and the glory of God, it will be perfectly natural for him, in the preparation and delivery of sermons, to do every thing in a manner that will tend to edify and sanctify the people. But if, on the contrary, his object be to secure his salary, play the orator, or promote any selfish interest whatever, he will naturally, and of course, select subjects, prepare, and deliver them, in a manner suited to the end he has in view. If his eye be single, his whole mind will be full of light, in regard to the manner of doing his work. If his eye be evil, his whole mind will be full of darkness, and he will do any thing else, rather than edify and sanctify his people.

5. This doctrine applies to the decision of every question of duty. In selecting fields of labor, courses of life, a companion for life, or any other question of interest and duty, if the eye is single, the whole mind will be full of light. Those considerations only will be taken into the account, and suffered to have weight, that ought to influence the decision of the question. On the other hand, if the eye be evil, the whole body will be full of darkness; and the decision of the question will certainly turn upon considerations that ought to have no influence in deciding the question.

6. If you are not conscious of a single eye, you cannot safely go forward in any thing. If you have already made up your mind upon a question of doctrine or duty, and have not made it up under the influence of a single eye, you may be, and probably are, in some important respects, entirely wrong. If in selecting a course of life, a field of labor, a kind of business, a location; if you have made a bargain, or done any thing else, with a selfish intention, or under the influence of an evil eye; as certain as Christ is true, your whole body was full of darkness. The whole must be reviewed.

Perhaps it may be objected to this, that many individuals are very much enlightened, and hold true opinions, and are very orthodox, who are yet under the influence of selfishness. To this I answer both from my own experience and the word of God--that they hold the truth only in words. They know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. They are deceived, and you who make the objection are deceived in respect to them, if you think they know the truth.

7. From this subject, it is easy to see why the Church and the ministry are so divided in their opinions. It is because they are so sectarian and selfish in their spirit. It is selfishness, and nothing but selfishness, that divides the Church. When the Church shall come to have a single eye, her watchmen and her members will then see eye to eye; because her body will then be full of light.

8. From this subject you can see the only true way of promoting real Christian Union. It is in vain to talk of destroying sectarianism by destroying creeds. Creeds may perpetuate, but they are not the cause of sectarianism. Selfishness, and nothing but selfishness is its cause. Let universal love and a single eye prevail, and sectarianism is no more. Destroy a sectarian spirit, let it be supplanted by love, and Christians would then be in a state of mind to examine their differences of opinion with candor--to come to such mutual explanations, and so honestly and thoroughly to weigh each others opinions and arguments, as to almost entirely coincide in opinion. But should there still be discrepancy of views, in relation to any points, it would be as far as possible from their thoughts, to withdraw from communion with each other, and to divide into sects and separate departments.

9. From this subject it is easy to see, why ministers feel as if they could not preach--feel as if they had nothing to say--are at a loss to know what to preach--no subject has any such interest as to enable them to preach upon it. When they have fallen into a selfish state of mind their whole body is full of darkness.

10. How infinitely important it is, that this truth should be continually remembered, that an evil eye, or selfish intention, invariably and necessarily brings the mind into great darkness. How many there are, even in the Christian Church, to whom the Bible is a sealed book, who are in great darkness in respect to truth, doctrine, and duty; whose minds resemble an ocean of darkness.

11. How many there are, who have great confidence in their own opinions, who are ready to hazard their souls upon the truth of them, who have made up their minds on the most important and solemn subjects, while under the influence of selfishness--have entered the Christian Church--are hugging their delusions--are following the guidance and instruction of those who are perhaps as much under the dominion of an evil eye, as they are themselves, and whose mind is as full of darkness as their own. And thus they go on, unsuspectingly, while Christ assures them in the most solemn manner, that if their eye is evil, their whole body is full of darkness. Still they believe it not. They have the highest confidence in their own opinions, and in the safety of their state; and thus rush on, with a kind of mad assurance, to the depths of hell!

## **Salvation Always Conditional**

Lecture XXIV

December 16, 1840

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Text.--1 Cor. 10:12: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

In remarking upon this subject I will show:

*I. What is intended by one's thinking that he standeth.*

*II. Show in what such a confidence may be founded.*

*III. That this confidence, whatever may be its foundation, cannot secure the soul against falling into sin and hell.*

*IV. That continued watchfulness and wakeful, activity of soul, are indispensable to*

*continued holiness and final salvation.*

### **I. What is intended by one's thinking that he standeth.**

The original word rendered thinketh, in this text, is used, according to some distinguished commentators, not to weaken but to strengthen the sense. In Luke 8:18, the same word is rendered seemeth. Thinketh, in this text, means great confidence, a strong assurance; as if the Apostle had said--Let him that has great confidence, or a strong assurance that he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

### **II. In what such a confidence may be founded.**

- 1. A person may be very confident of his own good state, in consequence of mistaken notions in respect to the natural goodness of his character.
- 2. He may feel great confidence, that he shall persevere in holiness, perform all his duty, and be saved, on the ground that he knows himself to be naturally able to obey God.
- 3. This confidence may be founded in a dependence upon our own discretion, and prudence, and wisdom, and zeal, in the cause of Christ.
- 4. It may be founded in a confidence in our experience. Persons are very apt to rely much upon their own experience; they suppose themselves to be more than a match, even for the devil himself, in cases where they have the light of their own past experience to guide them.
- 5. This confidence may be founded in the consideration of what God has done for us; in the fact, that He has so often given us grace to overcome temptation--and in the fact, that He has, perhaps for weeks, or months, kept us in a state of perfect conscious peace of mind, and given us entire exemption from any felt condemnation.
- 6. A man may be very confident that he standeth, because he believes himself to have been spiritually cleansed. He feels certain that God has renewed in him a clean heart, and a right spirit; and from this he draws the assured conclusion, that he shall not fall.
- 7. He may place great confidence in his purposed watchfulness. He feels so strong, and for the present, so steadfast a determination to watch unto prayer, and to pray in the Holy Ghost, that he feels a strong assurance of perseverance in holiness.
- 8. He may place great confidence in the great strength of his own faith. Indeed, persons are very apt, when in the exercise of strong faith, to suppose it next to impossible, that they shall ever again be guilty of unbelief. Especially is this true, if they are conscious, for a long time, of having exercised strong faith without any wavering.
- 9. This confidence may be founded in the fact, that we find ourselves to be dead to the influence of the world, and of the flesh, and, through grace, more than a match for the devil. When placed under circumstances in which we formerly found ourselves easily overcome, we may

experience such a kind of supernatural strength, and find ourselves so lifted above the influence of temptation, as to be confident, that all our lusts and sins are for ever slain.

- 10. This confidence may be founded in the promises of God. We feel that we believe them. We know it at the time, with as much certainty as we know our own existence, and hence infer, and feel assured, that God will keep us for ever from falling under the power of temptation, and "preserve us faultless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

### **III. This confidence, whatever may be its foundation, cannot of itself secure the soul against falling into sin and hell.**

- 1. Because, if it is founded in any thing naturally good in us, it is ill-founded of course.
- 2. If it is founded in what grace has already done for us, it is ill-founded; for however much grace may have done, it has not changed our nature. Our constitutional susceptibilities remain the same. It has not so changed our relations and circumstances as to exempt us from temptation; and consequently, nothing that grace has done, or ever will do for us, can render our perseverance in holiness unconditionally certain.
- 3. If this confidence is based upon our purposed watchfulness, prayerfulness, experience, or faith; these, independent of the sovereign grace of God, afford no such foundation for our confidence, as to render it at all certain, or even probable, that we shall not sin again.
- 4. If this confidence is based upon the promises of God, it will not render our perseverance unconditionally certain; because the promises of God are all conditioned upon our faith, and the right exercise of our own agency. This is a revealed principle under the government of God. Ezek. 18:21-29: "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel. Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" Ezek. 33:12-16: "Thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely

live; if he trust in his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live." Jer. 18:7-10: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, than I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them."

- 5. Any confidence in the promises of God, either for sanctification or final salvation, that does not recognize this universal principle in the government of God, is ill-founded and vain; because God has revealed this as a universal principle of his government; and whether expressed or not, in connection with each promise, it is always implied. Overlooking this fact, has often made the promises "a stone of stumbling" to those to whom they were given.

#### **IV. Continued watchfulness, and wakeful activity of soul, are indispensable to continued holiness and final salvation.**

- 1. This is evident from the fact, that moral government is a government of motives, in opposition to a government of force. Moral beings are not and cannot be forced, in the exercise of their moral agency.
- 2. The motives of moral government are suited and addressed to the constitutional susceptibilities of moral agents.
- 3. An analysis of the constitution of a moral being, as revealed to us by consciousness, will show that the motives calculated to influence moral agents may and must be divided into three classes:
  - (1.) Those addressed to hope, or the desire of happiness.
  - (2.) Those addressed to fear, or the dread of misery.
  - (3.) Those that move us to the exercise of disinterested love, or benevolence.

It is true, that should we enter more particularly into this subject, these classes of motives might be several times subdivided; but such subdivisions would carry me too far from my main design. I must, therefore, pass on to say--

- 4. That it is right to be influenced in a suitable degree, or to a certain extent, by each of these classes of motives.

- 5. It is impossible that we should not be influenced to a certain extent, by considerations that address our hopes and fears, if these considerations are apprehended by the mind.
- 6. Selfish minds are influenced wholly by hope and fear; or in other words, the motives that influence them to attempt obedience to God, are purely legal; that is--those that are presented in the sanctions of the law of God. This state of mind is sin.
- 7. The three classes of motives which I have named, or those that address our hopes and fears, and those that move us to the exercise of disinterested benevolence, are indispensable to fill up the circle of moral influences.
- 8. This is as certain as that the constitution of moral beings is susceptible of being influenced by these different classes of motives. We are conscious of possessing a nature adapted to the influence of these three classes of consideration. Unless, therefore, these three classes belong to moral government, and are indispensable to its perfection, moral government is not suited to the nature of moral beings.
- 9. The fact that conscience is a universal and indispensable attribute of moral agency, demonstrates the universal and unalterable necessity of these three classes of motives.
- 10. The Bible abundantly shows, that neither the present sanctification, justification, or final salvation of believers, is so unconditionally decided as not to need warnings, threatenings, reproofs, admonitions, and all those considerations belonging to these three great classes of motives.
- 11. God has shut up moral beings to a state of constant reliance upon Him for every thing natural and spiritual. We are to depend upon Him for our daily bread. He does not send an ocean of waters upon the earth at once, but has shut us up to depend upon Him for rains in their season. He does not give food enough at once to last a man all his life time. He so arranges his providence, as that, ordinarily, just about food enough for man and beast, is produced from year to year. In short, He so distributes his temporal favors as to make mankind see and feel their constant dependence upon Him.

This is equally true of spiritual blessings. He gives grace only from day to day, from hour to hour, and from moment to moment. He gives to no man a stock of grace upon which he can depend in future, without a constant reliance upon God, and a continual abiding in Christ. He deals with no man in spiritual things in such a manner that he can say to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much spiritual goods laid up in store for many years." But he has made continual reliance upon Christ indispensable to perseverance in holiness.

- 12. This course of procedure on the part of God, both in respect to natural and spiritual blessings, is naturally and unalterably indispensable to continued holiness. Suppose that God should cause food enough to grow in one year to last mankind a century; so that every man could say, in truth, "I have much food laid up in store for many years;" would not such a procedure manifestly tend to a spirit of infidelity, to destroy a sense of dependence upon God,

and beget among mankind a general forgetfulness and neglect of God. Who cannot see, that should the arrangements of providence be such as to make mankind feel, that all their temporal wants are already provided for, for a century, or for centuries to come, that it would ruin the world?

Just so in regard to spiritual things. If by regeneration, God really did, as some have supposed, change the very constitution of the soul, introduce, or implant within the soul a holy principle, that becomes a part of the constitution itself; in short, if He so remodded [sic.] the faculties, or made any such constitutional change whatever, as to beget the impression, that the constant indwelling, abiding influences of the Holy Spirit, are not essential to continued holiness, it would of course be the cause of universal backsliding and alienation from God.

- 13. It is, therefore, indispensable to continued holiness, that the mind should be shut up to a state of constant reliance upon the grace of God. And nothing can be more absurd, fanatical, or dangerous, than the idea, that our perseverance in holiness, or final salvation, can be rendered unconditionally certain.
- 14. It is naturally impossible for God to create a being, who can be for one moment independent of Himself. In Him all beings must "live, and move, and have their being."
- 15. To the fact that neither justification, sanctification, nor final salvation, can be unconditionally secured in this life, by any act of ours, or by any grace received; and that, therefore, continual watchfulness and wakeful exertion, and fear of falling, are indispensable to continued holiness--it is objected, that "perfect love casteth out fear." To this I answer:
  - (1.) This cannot mean, every kind and degree of fear; for a certain kind and degree of fear is universally insisted on, not only as a duty, but as constituting an essential element of holiness. Psalm 111:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." 2 Cor. 7:1: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Eph. 5:21: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Ps. 2:11: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Mat. 28:8: "They departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy." Phil. 2:12: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Gen. 22:12: "He said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God." Ps. 112:1: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments." Ps. 128:1: "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways." Prov. 28:14: "Happy is the man that feareth always; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." Col. 3:22: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God." 1 Pet. 1:17: "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Heb. 12:28: "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."
  - (2.) One of the characteristics of wicked men, is, that they fear not God.

- (3.) Love casts our slavish fear, but not that kind of fear that consists with love. The foundation for the exercise of which is laid in the very constitution of our being.

## REMARKS.

1. No one act of faith, nor any other exercise, can render salvation from sin or hell unconditionally certain. This is manifest from the fact, that warnings and threatenings are every where addressed to the saints; which would be absurd, if their justification or sanctification were already unconditionally certain.

2. It is a capital mistake, and a dangerous error, to maintain, that one act of faith brings the soul into a state of unconditional and permanent justification. That this view of justification cannot be true, is manifest from the following considerations:

(1.) If the believer is so justified, as not to come under condemnation if he sins, it must be because the law of God is abrogated. Some have maintained, that the penalty of the law is for ever set aside in his case, on the exercise of the first act of faith. Now if this is true, then, as it respects him, the law is in fact abrogated; for a law without a penalty is no law. If the penalty is, as to him, for ever set aside, in such a sense that he may sin, and yet not be condemned, and subject to that penalty, to him there is no law. The precept is only counsel or advice, as distinguished from law. But if the law is set aside he has no rule of action--no obligatory standard of duty with which to compare himself; and he can, therefore, be neither sinful nor holy, any more than the brute.

(2.) That a believer is not unconditionally and permanently justified by any one act of faith, is evident from the fact, that every believer feels condemned in his own conscience, when he sins. And if our own conscience, or heart, condemn us, is not God greater than our heart--and shall not He condemn us? "Shall mortal man be more just than God?"

(3.) The believers are not unconditionally and permanently justified by one act of faith, is plainly asserted, in Ezek. 18:21-29, and 33:12-16, [as quoted under the fourth division of the third head of this lecture.] Nothing can be more in point than these passages of scripture. For here it is expressly affirmed, that "if a righteous man forsake his righteousness, his former righteousness shall not be remembered;" but "in his sin that he sinneth shall he die."

To this it is replied, that these and similar passages are hypothetical--that they do not assert, that any righteous man will fall from his righteousness; but only, that if he should, he would be condemned. I answer:

That this is the very thing for which I am contending. I admit, that these and other kindred passages are hypothetical, and insist that for this very reason, they flatly contradict the proposition, that by one act of faith believers are unalterably and unconditionally justified. They make the condition of continued justification to be, continued obedience; and the condition of perfect justification to be, perfect obedience.



(4.) That one act of faith does not permanently and unconditionally justify the believer, is evident from the fact already alluded to, that the Bible every where abounds with warnings, reproof, encouragements, and every possible inducement to perseverance in holiness to the end--every where making the condition of final salvation to be, continuance or perseverance in holiness to the end of life.

To this it is objected, that these threatenings, warnings, &c., are the means by which the saints are caused to persevere in holiness.

Yes, truly, I answer, so they are. And this very fact proves, that they are not unconditionally or permanently justified, and, that they are justified no farther than they are sanctified. For what could all these warning and threatenings amount to--why should they be recorded--or what possible influence could they have, upon the supposition that they are already perfectly, permanently, and unconditionally justified, and that, therefore, their final perseverance and final salvation are already unconditionally secure? Indeed, it is absurd to say, that by one act of faith, they have become unalterably justified, and yet, that only upon certain conditions, viz: their persevering to the end, can they be saved.

(5.) That believers are not, by one act of faith, brought into a state of permanent or unconditional justification, is evident, from the manifest tendency of such a sentiment. This is asserting, in its most objectionable form, the sentiment so often attributed to Calvinists by our Methodist brethren--that if a man is once converted he will be saved, however much he may backslide, and even should he die in a state of utmost backsliding.

3. The certain knowledge and belief of unconditional salvation from sin, or hell, or of unconditional justification and salvation, would break the power of moral government, and insure a fall. It would destroy the balance of motives, and nullify entirely the power of that class of motives that are addressed to the hopes and fears of men. What, I pray you, would all the warnings of the Bible avail to sustain the virtue of a man, who already knew himself to be in a state of unconditional salvation from sin, condemnation, and hell? Do you answer, that he does not need them, and that all regard to them would be selfishness. I ask, why then, are they found in the Bible, actually and every where addressed to the saints?

To this it may be replied, that a sanctified soul is influenced by love, and not at all by hope and fear. I answer:

It is true, that love is the mainspring of action; but it is also true, that both the hopes and fears of men sustain such a relation to moral government, as that considerations addressed to them, make up an indispensable part of those influences that sustain the soul in a course of steady obedience.

To this it is objected again, that those saints who have believed themselves to be in a state of unconditional justification, and who have had the felt assurance of their final perseverance and salvation, have not found that this felt assurance was a stumbling-block to them; but have felt sustained in virtue by this very consideration. To this I answer:

That if, by the faith of assurance is meant, our assurance of final perseverance in holiness, and consequent salvation, I can easily see, that such an assurance would not be a stumbling-block to the soul. But, mark, this is not an assurance of unconditional justification. For, saints who have this assurance, have universally believed, that their justification and salvation were conditioned upon their continued holiness. They have believed that if they fall into sin, they are condemned, and that, should they die in their sins, or in a backslidden state, they would be damned. Their belief and assurance have been, that they should, through grace assisting them, be enabled so to exercise faith and persevere in the use of their powers of moral agency, as to be finally justified and saved. This assurance is eminently calculated to encourage them in all ways of well-doing, and in the most strenuous efforts to perfect holiness in the fear of God. But suppose they get the idea, that they have so believed in Christ as to render their continued holiness, their permanent justification, and final salvation, unconditionally certain--this is an eminently dangerous and ruinous belief, and is, as far as possible from any state of mind encouraged by the word of God.

4. Moral beings cannot be in a state of unconditional sanctification or justification, in any world. This is manifest, from the fact, that they cannot be put beyond the natural possibility of sinning. If they were, they would be put beyond the possibility of being holy. Holiness implies moral liberty. Moral liberty implies the power of doing right or wrong. It is, therefore, naturally impossible, that moral beings should in any world be placed under circumstances, where their eternal justification, sanctification, and salvation, are unconditionally certain. The continued justification of the inhabitants of heaven, must be for ever conditioned upon their continued holiness. And their continued holiness must ever depend upon and consist in the right voluntary exercise of their powers of moral agency. And nothing but that grace which is perfectly consistent with the exercise of their own liberty, can render their final perseverance certain.

5. "Faring always," or "passing the time of our sojourning here with fear," as the Apostle commands, does not imply unbelief, and is not a sinful state of mind; because the promises of God are all conditional--and as the promises of sanctification are conditioned upon our own faith, and the promises of justification conditioned upon our sanctification, and as all is suspended upon the right use of the powers of moral agency which we possess, it behooves us to "fear always--to walk softly, to gird up the loins of our minds, to be sober, vigilant, and to run with patience the race set before us."

6. The assurance that we shall never sin again, does not secure us against sin, and has, in this world of severe temptation, a manifest tendency to procure our fall.

7. Nor does a fall, in such a case, in the least degree tend to prove, that there is no such state as that of permanent sanctification in this life.

8. Nor does it impeach the veracity of Christ. Some persons have supposed, that they have attained a state of permanent sanctification, and felt assured that they should never sin again. They maintained that the veracity of Christ was pledged in such a sense, that He would be guilty of falsehood, if He should suffer them to fall into sin; and especially have they inferred this from the fact, that some promise that Christ would keep them, had been deeply impressed upon their own minds. Afterwards, however, they have fallen into sin, and been greatly tempted to entertain hard thoughts of Christ, to impeach his veracity, and deny his truth.

Now the mistake in this case was, in overlooking the fact, that all the promises of Christ are, from their very nature conditioned upon the continued exercise of faith in us. Misunderstanding the promise, and leaving out of view the condition, was the foundation of the assumption, that Christ was pledged for your perseverance in holiness; and if you have fallen into sin the blame is your own. You expected of Christ what He has never promised, except upon a condition that you have not fulfilled.

To this view of the subject it has been objected, that if this is true, the promises of the gospel amount only to this, that Christ will keep us if we will keep ourselves. To this I answer:

That in a very important sense this is true. I have formerly felt this objection strongly myself, and was strongly inclined to, and even entertained an opposite opinion. What, I said, can the promise of the gospel mean nothing more than this, "I will keep him who will keep himself?" Much consideration and prayer, with searching the word of God, have led me to the conviction, that this is the exact truth, and this opinion is in exact keeping with the whole providential government of God.

Take all temporal blessings. Who does not know that all the promises of daily bread, are so conditioned upon the use of indispensable means, as that they amount to this-- "I will feed him who will feed himself; I will take care of him who will take care of himself." Take all the promises that respect the things of this life, and the same will be found to be true. If God promises health, it is upon the condition, that we obey the laws of our physical existence; so that the promise amounts to this-- "I will keep him who will keep himself in health." If He promise to prolong our natural life, it is upon condition that we comply with the indispensable laws of life. So that the promise amounts to this-- "I will keep him alive who will keep himself alive."

Now the same is emphatically and eminently true of all spiritual blessings. Who does not know, that as a matter of fact, every believer progresses in religion precisely in proportion to his own faithfulness--that God keeps him from falling, when he watches, and thereby keeps himself from falling--that he has the spirit of prayer, in proportion as he watches unto prayer, and prays in the Holy Ghost--and that, as a matter of fact, He keeps the saints, only through their own watchfulness, faithfulness, and efforts. So that it may be truly said, that He keeps those only who will keep themselves--that He saves those only who will save themselves. Nor does this in the least degree set aside, or depreciate the grace of God; nor at all deny or set aside any correct idea of the sovereignty of God. Who ever supposed, that the farmer, who tills his land, the mechanic, who plies his trade, or the student, who trims his midnight lamp, either denies or sets aside the sovereignty of God, in accomplishing the ends at which he aims. Indeed, the sovereignty of God consists in this--in bringing about the great ends of his government, through the agency of his creatures; and no correct idea of his sovereignty will ever leave out of view, the use of the natural and indispensable means of procuring the things which He has promised.

9. Nor does this view of the subject at all touch the question of the perseverance of the saints, as I understand that doctrine to be taught in the Bible. The doctrine there inculcated, if I understand it, is not, that by one act of faith men are brought into a state of unconditional and unalterable justification; but that the saints, through the grace of God, will be kept in ways of obedience, to the end.

10. Although there can be no unconditional certainty of perpetual holiness, justification, or final salvation, in any world, yet we can have such a kind of assurance of all these, as to cast out all slavish fear, that hath torment. Think you not, that the angels know, and saints in heaven know, that if they should sin, they would be sent to hell? And think you not that they know they have power to sin, are liable to sin, and that without watchfulness, and wakeful activity, and perseverance, they will sin? They must know this; and yet, this knowledge does not bring them into slavish bondage; but affords just that healthy and holy stimulus to holy perseverance, that is demanded by the very constitution of moral agency, in any world.

11. Sanctification, justification, and final salvation, are all put upon the same ground. And it cannot be true, that men are justified, any farther than they are sanctified; or that they are, or ever can be saved, any farther than they are cleansed from sin. Gospel justification is generally defined to be pardon and acceptance. But can a man be pardoned, any farther than he is penitent? Can the soul be accepted any farther than it is obedient? Certainly it cannot be, unless Antinomianism is true, and the law of God is abrogated. The distinction, then, that is commonly made, (which I, following the current of the Church, without sufficient examination, once held myself,) between instantaneous justification and progressive sanctification, must be without foundation. Every man feels that he is condemned, and not justified, when he sins, and that he is kept out of condemnation only by keeping out of sin. This is the doctrine of the Bible. It is the doctrine of conscience and of common sense. And that is certainly a most licentious view of the doctrine of justification, that maintains that justification is perfected while sanctification is imperfect; that justification is instantaneous, while sanctification is progressive.

Beloved Christian brother, why do you pray for forgiveness when you sin? Is it not because you feel condemned? But if you were already perfectly and permanently justified, you are mistaken in praying for forgiveness; for you are already forgiven, and not condemned. You cannot possibly be pardoned, unless you are condemned; for what is pardon, but setting aside the execution of law? If, therefore, men are permanently justified by one act of faith, they not only have no need of pardon from that moment, however much they may sin, but to pardon them is impossible, as they are not condemned. And why, let me ask you, should Christ teach you to pray daily for the forgiveness of your past sins, if by one act of faith, you are permanently justified? Let me conclude, then, by saying, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

## 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 1840 Collection.**